NATION

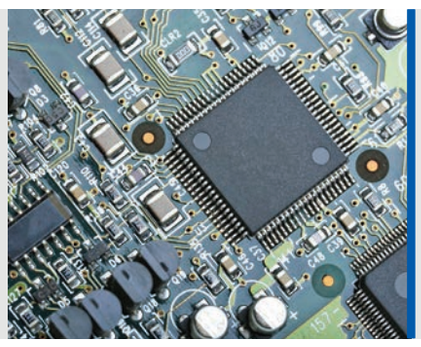
Heavy rains batter Mumbai, suburbs

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

India now eyes self-reliance in fertilisers

≫ Page: 7 ≪



SPORTS

CAFA Nations Cup: Chhetri missing in list of 35 probables

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈہ روزنامہ بنگلور

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ISL warn AIFF of shutdown risk amid impasse

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

Eleven Indian Super League (ISL) clubs have warned the All India Football Federation (AIFF) that they face the real risk of shutting down if the ongoing impasse over the non-renewal of the Master Rights Agreement (MRA) with ISL organisers FSDL continues. In a joint letter to AIFF President Kalyan Chaubey, the clubs cited financial paralysis, suspended operations, loss of revenue, and threat to over 2,000 livelihoods. They also warned that the crisis could jeopardise India's participation in AFC and FIFA events. The clubs urged the AIFF to urgently mention the issue before the Supreme Court on 18 August to avoid irreversible damage.. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

China hands over third Hangor sub to Pakistan

BEIJING, 16 AUG

China has delivered the third of eight advanced Hangor-class submarines to Pakistan, further strengthening Islamabad's naval capabilities amid rising Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean—India's strategic backyard. The launch ceremony was held in Wuhan, Hubei province, on Thursday, Chinese state media reported. The second submarine was handed over in March this year. The Hangor-class submarines, built under a China-Pakistan deal, are equipped with cutting-edge weaponry, advanced sensors, strong stealth, high mobility, and long underwater endurance. Speaking at the launch, Pakistan's Vice Admiral Abdul Samad said the submarine would help "sustain regional power equilibrium and ensure maritime stability."*—PTI*

'Next Gen GST' to pave way for single tax slab by 2047

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

The Centre's proposed 'Next Gen GST' aims to replace the current four-slab system with just two slabs — 5 per cent and 18 per cent—alongside a 40 per cent rate for sin goods, officials said Saturday. This major reform, pending GST Council approval, is designed to lower taxes on essential items, boost consumption, and stabilise tax structures. Over 99 per cent of items taxed at 12 per cent and 90 per cent from the 28 per cent slab will move to lower rates. Officials said this structure considers farmers, MSMEs, and the middle class, and could ultimately lead to a single GST rate by 2047. The proposal, prompted partly by global tariff pressures, will go to a GoM and then the GST Council next month.*—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Don may not impose more tariffs on India over Russian oil

Trump says Putin 'lost a client'; claims he stopped India & Pak war

Russian President Vladimir Putin greets US President Donald Trump at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, in Anchorage, Alaska *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW YORK, 16 AUG

President Donald Trump has indicated that the US may not impose secondary tariffs on countries continuing to procure Russia crude oil.

There were apprehensions that additional secondary tariffs would have hit India in case the US decided to enforce them.

In an interview aboard Air Force One with Fox News, Trump said, "Well, he (Russian President Vladimir Putin) lost an oil client, so to speak, which is India, which was doing about 40 per cent of the oil. China, as you know, is doing a lot…And if I did what's called a secondary sanction, or a secondary tariff, it would be very devastating from their standpoint. If I have to do it, I'll do it. Maybe I won't have to do it."

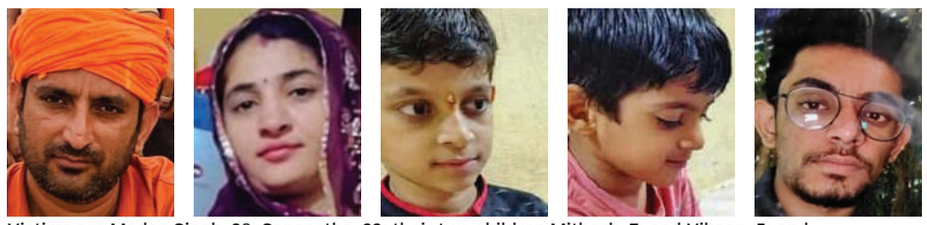
The statement comes after US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent warned that such tariffs could increase if the Trump-Putin summit in Alaska failed to yield progress on the Russia-Ukraine conflict — which it didn't. Currently, the US has imposed 50 per cent tariffs on India, including 25 per cent specifically for purchasing Russian oil, effective from 27 August. India's Ministry of External Affairs has called the move "unjustified and unreasonable", asserting it would take all necessary steps to safeguard national interests.

In the same interview, Trump repeated his earlier claim that he stopped a war between India and Pakistan. "They were shooting down airplanes... I would have said it was going to go nuclear. I was able to get it done," he said.

Trump claimed he resolves conflicts using trade leverage. "I say, 'We're not going to do a deal unless you make peace.'"

Since 10 May, Trump has repeatedly said he brokered a ceasefire between India and Pakistan. However, India has maintained that the agreement was the result of direct military-to-military communication between the Directors General of Military Operations (DGMOs). Despite Trump's assertions, Indian officials continue to deny any third-party mediation in bilateral issues with Pakistan. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 5 & 6



Victims are Madan Singh, 38; Sangeetha, 33; their two children Mithesh, 7; and Vihaan, 5; and neighbour Suresh Kumar, 26 *PHOTO: SALAR*

5 killed in fire at Bengaluru plastic goods factory

BENGALURU, 16 AUG

Five people, including a family of four, died in a devastating fire at a plastic articles manufacturing unit in Nagarthapet, central Bengaluru, early on Saturday.

Victims are Madan Singh, 38, and Sangeetha, 33, and their two children Mithesh, 7, and Vihaan, 5, and neighbour Suresh Kumar, 26.

Madan Singh, a native of Rajasthan, had rented the building for nearly 10 years. He operated a small unit manufacturing plastic kitchenware, mats and steel utensils. The family lived on the top floor of the building.

Police Commissioner Seemanth Kumar Singh said preliminary investigations suggest an electrical short circuit may have sparked the fire. The blaze began on the ground floor and rapidly engulfed the second and third floors. The bodies of the woman and two children were found in a third-floor room, reportedly locked from the outside.

A complaint was filed by Madan Singh's elder brother, Gopal Singh, at Halasuru Gate Police Station. He alleged the building was constructed illegally without fire safety clearances, proper ventilation, or emergency exits. It was rented out for shops, godowns and residences without necessary precautions, the complaint stated.

The Fire Department received the alert at 3.14 am. Eight vehicles, 55 firefighters and 21 officers were deployed.

Fire blazes at a plastic factory at Nagarathpete in Bengaluru on Saturday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

"It was packed like a godown, making firefighting extremely difficult," said a fire official. The building is located in a densely populated commercial hub.

Thousands of buildings are constructed in small spaces without proper permits BBMP must check them, Home Minister G Parameshwara said . *—PTI*

Cops stop 'Bengal Files' trailer launch

KOLKATA, 16 AUG

The Kolkata Police on Saturday allegedly halted the trailer launch of 'The Bengal Files', a controversial film on the 1946 Calcutta Riots, director Vivek Agnihotri claimed.

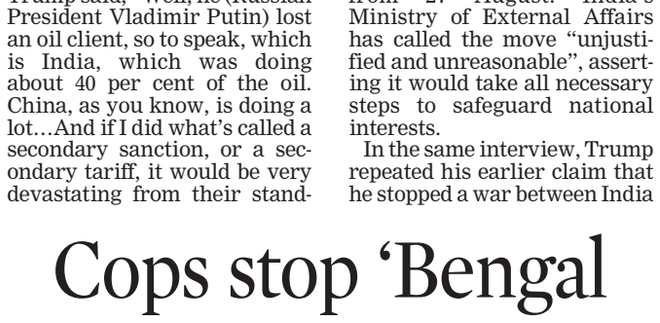
The trailer was scheduled for screening at a five-star hotel in Kolkata. Agnihotri said hotel staff initially stopped the screening around 1pm, citing that only a press conference had been approved. Later, as the trailer was played again, five to six police officers reportedly entered the banquet hall and interrupted the screening midway.

"This is an attack on democratic rights," Agnihotri alleged, stating that the film had been cleared by the censor board and a previous ban had been stayed by the Calcutta High Court. He accused the ruling Trinamool Congress and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of orchestrating the disruption.

Agnihotri asserted the film "is based on facts" and claimed it exposes atrocities on Bengali Hindus in 1946. "Do you want to erase history?" he asked.

The film, set to release on 5 September, explores the communal violence in undivided Bengal.

TMC Minister Bratya Basu questioned Agnihotri's silence on the 2002 Gujarat riots, calling the incident an "administrative decision". *—PTI*



Film director Vivek Agnihotri reacts after the trailer launch of 'The Bengal Files' was allegedly stopped in Kolkata on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

Cong MLA claims DKS will become CM, faces party ire

BENGALURU, 16 AUG

Karnataka Congress MLA Basavaraju V Shivaganga on Saturday claimed that Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar would assume the Chief Minister's post after December, reigniting speculation over a leadership change in the state.

"After December, DK will become the Chief Minister," Shivaganga, the MLA from Channagiri, told reporters in Davangere. He has made similar remarks earlier, asserting a change in leadership is imminent.

Reacting strongly, Shivakumar called the statement a "violation of party discipline" and confirmed that a notice would be served to the MLA.

"No one should talk about the CM post. MLAs must follow party discipline and avoid creating confusion. Shivaganga has been warned before. A notice will now be issued to him," Shivakumar said in a statement. Political circles were abuzz with speculation about a possible change in the Chief Minister's post later this year, citing a reported power-sharing formula between incumbent CM Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar. *—PTI*

LIL KRISHNAS & RADHAS STEAL THE SHOW

Children from Rotary Bangalore School charm the crowd with a vibrant dance performance for Krishna Janmashtami celebrations in Nagadevanahalli, Bengaluru, on Saturday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Centre opposes timelines for Guvs, Prez

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

The Centre has told the Supreme Court that imposing fixed timelines on the Governor and the President to act on bills passed by a state Assembly would cause a "constitutional disorder" and violate the separation of powers.

In written submissions filed in response to the Presidential Reference, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta argued that such timelines would amount to one constitutional organ assuming powers not vested in it, disrupting the balance envisioned by the framers.

The reference was made by President Droupadi Murmu under Article 143(1) following the apex court's April 8 verdict, which mandated that the President decide on bills referred by a Governor within three months. The ruling also held that Governors must act in accordance with ministerial advice on bills and allowed state governments to approach the top court if the President withholds assent.

The five-judge bench headed by CJI BR Gavai will begin hearings on 19 August. *—PTI*

BOOKS SAFFRONISED?

Jinnah, Cong, Mountbatten 'culprits' of Partition: NCERT

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

A special module released by NCERT to mark Partition Horrors Remembrance Day has held Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Congress party, and then Viceroy Lord Mountbatten responsible for the Partition of India in 1947.

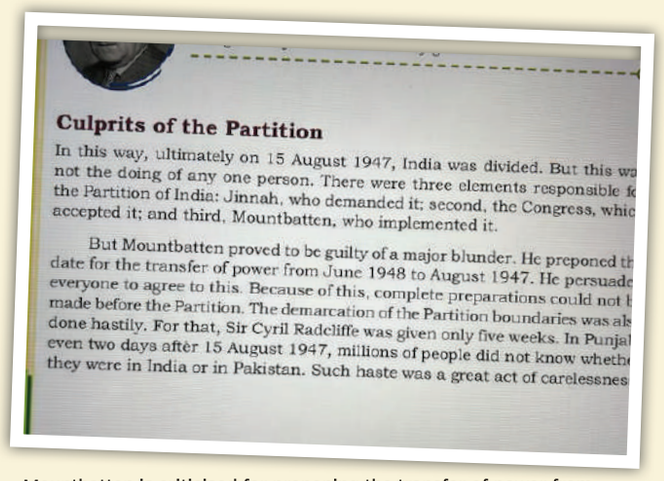
The module, part of supplementary resources for Classes 6 to 12, states that Partition was "not inevitable" but the result of "wrong ideas." It blames three figures: Jinnah, for demanding Partition; the Congress, for accepting it; and Mountbatten, for implementing it hastily. Mountbatten is criticised for preponing the transfer of power from June 1948 to August 1947, leaving little time for preparation. The demarcation of boundaries by Sir Cyril Radcliffe in just five weeks is described as a "great act of carelessness," with millions in Punjab unaware of which country they were in even after 15 August.

Jinnah is quoted expressing surprise at Pakistan becoming a reality during his lifetime, while Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is cited calling Partition "bitter medicine" to prevent civil war. Mahatma Gandhi, though opposed to Partition, chose not to resist the Congress's decision through violence.

The module also flags Kashmir as a post-Partition challenge and accuses some countries of pressuring India and aiding Pakistan over the Kashmir issue. The secondary-stage version attributes the roots of the Pakistan movement to "political Islam," rejecting permanent equality with non-Muslims.

Both modules begin with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2021 message declaring 14 August as Partition Horrors Remembrance Day. *—PTI*

> **Partition's pains can never be forgotten. Millions of our sisters and brothers were displaced, and many lost their lives due to mindless hate and violence. In memory of the struggles and sacrifices of our people, 14th August will be observed as Partition Horrors Remembrance Day**
>
> NCERT includes Prime Minister Narendra Modi's post on X in the book



Culprits of the Partition

In this way, ultimately on 15 August 1947, India was divided. But this wa not the doing of any one person. There were three elements responsible fo the Partition of India: Jinnah, who demanded it; second, the Congress, whic accepted it; and third, Mountbatten, who implemented it.

But Mountbatten proved to be guilty of a major blunder. He preponed th date for the transfer of power from June 1948 to August 1947. He persuade everyone to agree to this. Because of this, complete preparations could not b made before the Partition. The demarcation of the Partition boundaries was als done hastily. For that, Sir Cyril Radcliffe was given only five weeks. In Punjal even two days after 15 August 1947, millions of people did not know whethe they were in India or in Pakistan. Such haste was a great act of carelessnes

Mountbatten is criticised for preponing the transfer of power from June 1948 to August 1947, leaving little time for preparation

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Star Jet plane returns to Belagavi after tech glitch

BELAGAVI, 16 AUG

A Star Jet Airways flight returned safely to Belagavi airport on Saturday morning after the pilot detected technical errors shortly after takeoff. The aircraft, which was en route to Mumbai, developed faults just 15 minutes post-departure. According to airport sources, the 48 passengers aboard the Star Air S 5111 flight, which took off at 7.50am and was scheduled to arrive in Mumbai at 8.50am, transferred to another plane for their journey. Sambra airport director S Tyagarajan confirmed, "The pilot informed the airport control centre of the issue and landed back safely. It was not an emergency landing but arrived like regular arrivals to the terminal." He added, "Since it landed normally, there was no need to specify it as an 'emergency landing.'"

—SALAR NEWS

STATE SEES 8 ACCIDENT DEATHS IN 24 HOURS

Safety is still a distant dream on State's National Highways

BENGALURU, 16 AUG

At least eight people were killed and several others critically injured in road accidents across the State on Saturday morning. The accidents occurred in Nelamangala, Devanahalli, Karwar, and Yadgir, once again highlighting the lack of safety on the State's National Highways.

3 people died when a bus crashed into a parked lorry in Karwar, early Saturday *PHOTO: SALAR*

KARWAR: 3 DEAD AS BUS CRASHES INTO PARKED LORRY

Three passengers were killed and seven others, including a child, sustained severe injuries when the bus they were travelling in crashed to a parked truck Mavalli Cross in Yellapur taluk of the district. The impact crushed a large portion of the bus.

The accident occurred while the bus was overtaking a vehicle on the Yellapur–Ankola and crashed into the parked lorry in the dark. Reports suggest that the lorry's hazard lights or indicators were not switched on, leading to the collision. However, police also suspected the accident was caused by negligence from the bus driver, Yamanappa Magi.

The deceased and injured were from Bagalkot district and were said to be travelling to Goa for job purposes.

NELAMANGALA: KSRTC BUS COLLIDES WITH SHEEP LORRY

On National Highway 48 near Gundenahalli village, a KSRTC bus collided head-on with a lorry carrying sheep. Two people inside the lorry died on the spot. The impact severely damaged a section of the bus. A case has been registered at Nelamangala Traffic Police Station.

YADGIR: CAR AND TANKER COLLISION CLAIMS 2 LIVES

In the early hours of Saturday, on National Highway 150 near Neelahalli Cross in Yadgir taluk, a car collided with a tanker lorry. Two passengers in the car died on the spot.

DEVANAHALLI: 1 DEAD AS CAR RAMS INTO CANTER

Near Gokare on the Hosakote–Dabaspet National Highway, a car transporting tomatoes from Devanahalli to Kolar rammed into the rear of a Canter from Tamil Nadu. One passenger in the Bolero died and the driver sustained minor injuries. *—Salar News*

OVER SUGARCANE PRICES

Farmers to picket Vidhana Soudha, protest indefinitely

MYSURU, 16 AUG

The State Sugarcane Growers Association will launch a major protest from 20 August, with thousands of farmers across Karnataka set to picket Vidhana Soudha and begin an indefinite overnight dharna at Freedom Park, Bengaluru.

The organisation's President, Hallikerehundi Bhagyraj said Saturday the association demands that the State government fixes a scientific price of Rs 4500 per tonne of sugarcane supply during the crushing and harvesting season.

He claimed that sugar mills were fleecing farmers. The government must install weighing machines in front of the mills. The mills must also bear the transportation and harvesting cost.

Bhagyraj also said that black marketeers were hoarding chemical fertilisers and creating an artificial scarcity to sell it inflated prices. He demanded government intervention.

Other demands that the government expedites the construction Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir, and to increase the milk procurement prices to Rs 55 per litre.

Bhagyraj also urged the Centre to relax CIBIL score for farmers for of loan distribution, remove the restrictions on cattle grazing in forest land, and to increase the compensation to Rs 25 lakh for victims who died by wild animals attack.

Farmer leaders Anduvinahalli Raju, Treasurer Kerehundi Rajanna, Convener Hanumaiah, and several others were present during the press meet. *—Salar News*

NURTURING THE FUTURE

AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan participated in a felicitation programme for toppers in SSLC and PUC who studied in Urdu Medium schools. The programme was organised by Anjman e Taraqi Urdu Hind, Karnataka Chapter. Mohammed Obaidulla Sharief, Syed Ashraf, MA Khalid KAS Retd among others were present *PHOTO: SALAR*

State announces survey for Devadasi welfare

BENGALURU, 16 AUG

Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh, CM Siddaramaiah, DyCMDK Shivakumar, Ministers HC Mahadevappa and Priyank Kharge and others during the SC/ST Development Council meet Vidhana Soudha on Saturday *PHOTO: X/DKS*

The State government will undertake a re-survey of Devadasi rehabilitation, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said, as he chaired a meeting of the State Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes Development Council at the Vidhana Soudha Assembly Hall.

He said that new laws will be introduced to ensure the proper eradication of the Devadasi system. He said there would be severe punishment for those involved, including parents who push their daughters into the system. "If the Devadasi system is still alive, we all should hang our heads in shame."

"The Devadasi system has already been banned, and strict measures must be taken to ensure it does not continue under any circumstances," he wrote on X after the meeting.

The meeting came on the 10th anniversary of the implementation of the SCSP/TSP Act.

"In the history of Karnataka, Rs. 2.97 lakh crore has been spent so far on welfare schemes for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes," he said. "It is shameful if, despite such expenditure, there is no improvement in social, economic, and educational living standards." *—Salar News*

Marital affair leads to murder, suicide in Belagavi

BELAGAVI, 16 AUG

A love affair turned tragic in Bidi village of Khanapur taluk, Belagavi district, on Friday night. Reshma Tiravir, 29, mother of two, and Anand Sutar, father of three, had reportedly been in a relationship for two years. After Reshma's husband lodged a complaint, Nandgad police had earlier warned Anand to end the affair. On Friday, Anand allegedly lured Reshma to a secluded spot, where he stabbed her nine times, killing her instantly. He then turned the knife on himself, sustaining grievous injuries. He died while being shifted to Belagavi Civil Hospital. Police said Anand's wife is pregnant with their fourth child. A case has been registered at Nandgad police station.

—SALAR NEWS

DKS accuses BJP of politicising Dharmasthala

BENGALURU, 16 AUG

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar accused the BJP of "playing politics" over the Dharmasthala mass burial case.

He was responding to BJP's "Dharmasthala Chalo" rally, in which party members travelled in several vehicles to the temple town protesting against what they call a "smear campaign" against Hindu temples and traditions.

"BJP did not speak anything initially, now all of them are speaking. They are going there (Dharmasthala) for the sake of politics," Shivakumar said.

"They think that Hinduism is their private property," he quipped.

The SIT is probing charges of multiple murders, rapes, and burials across different places in Dharmasthala, over the past two decades, based on the complaint by a former sanitation worker.

According to the Congress, whoever is guilty should be punished.

"When a complaint was given – whether it was a lie or not – when it was given before the magistrate, if it was not investigated, the same BJP would have questioned the government. Now they are doing politics," he said. *—PTI*

Officials visit the house Bhosaga in Afzalpur taluk. Nearly 50 house walls have collapsed recently due to heavy rains in the taluk *PHOTO: SALAR*

Woman dies after house collapse in Kalaburagi

KALABURAGI, 16 AUG

A woman died in Kalaburagi after a wall of her house collapsed on Saturday due to heavy rain.

For the past one week, Afzalpur taluk has been witnessing heavy downpours, and the deceased, Lakshmibai Biradar, 55, of Bhosaga village was the latest casualty.

Reports indicate that already around 50 house walls have collapsed in the area after becoming soaked in rainwater.

"Due to continuous rainfall, mud walls are getting soaked and collapsing," Tahsildar Sanjukumar Dasar said, "People should remain cautious. Those living in old, dilapidated houses or mud houses are advised not to stay in them during rains".

"I visited Bhosaga village and gathered details. The revenue inspector and village accountant are at the spot conducting the mahazar. Compensation will be provided," he added. *—Salar News*

BJP: Attacking RSS a 'guarantee solution' for CM

BENGALURU, 16 AUG

BJP hit back at Chief Minister Siddaramaiah for his criticism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi describing the RSS as the "world's biggest NGO" during his Independence Day speech. "It's no surprise CM jumps at every chance to attack the RSS. It's not belief - it's survival," Opposition Leader R Ashoka said on X. It was a "guarantee solution" for Siddaramaiah to save his chair, he said. Ahika claimed that Siddaramaiah attacks the RSS to impress the Gandhi family and prove loyalty to the Congress High Command, to keep the CM chair safe from the factional knives in his own party, and to distract from his government's failures, by demonising an organisation that serves the nation selflessly. *—PTI*

CITYFOLK PROTECT THEIR DOGS

People protest against the Supreme Court's verdict to remove Delhi's stray dogs, at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Saturday *PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD*

Noted industrialist Ashfaq Peeran no more

BENGALURU, 16 AUG

Renowned industrialist and political-social activist Ashfaq Peeran died due to cardiac arrest in the early hours of Saturday. He was a well-known figure in Karnataka's socio-political circles, recognised for his philanthropic work and close association with several political leaders. Funeral prayers were held at Masjid Meraj, Bada Makan, followed by his burial at Bada Makan on Siddaiah Road.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, a long-time associate of Peeran, visited him at the hospital on Friday and offered his condolences at the family residence on Saturday. He called Peeran's passing as a "personal loss"

Rajya Sabha's former deputy chairman K Rahman Khan said, "Peeran rendered silent but impactful service to the State and the nation. His dedication to resolving societal issues and his commitment to humanity made him an exemplary social worker."

Khan added that the Muslim community has lost a true intellectual and a devoted humanitarian. He extended his condolences to his brother Syed Sadaqat Peeran and son Syed Abbas Peeran. *—Salar News*

Safaris to get mesh protection; tourists told to behave

BENGALURU, 16 AUG

Eshwar B Khandre, the State Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister, has instructed officials at biological parks to install mesh on the windows and photography openings of all safari vehicles. This decision follows an alarming incident on 15 August, when a leopard managed to enter a safari vehicle at the Bannerghatta Biological Park (BNP) in City, scratching a 12-year-old boy before it was eventually removed.

Khandre emphasised the need for stringent precautions during safaris, saying, "I have instructed the officials to take all necessary precautionary measures." He also said that warnings be issued to tourists and that a message should be printed on the tickets. *—PTI*

'SAKHI SURAKSHA'

2,200 menstrual cups distributed in Mandya: Priyank

BENGALURU, 16 AUG

Under the 'Sakhi Suraksha' scheme, nearly 2,200 menstrual cups have been distributed in Mandya of the State, announced Rural Development Minister Priyank Kharge on Saturday.

Kharge expressed on social media platform X that Sakhi Suraksha represents an important stride in upholding women's dignity. "Using Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds, a step has been taken to distribute menstrual cups to rural women to raise awareness about menstrual cup usage," he stated.

He emphasised that these reusable menstrual cups can be used long-term and are beneficial for the environment. "These cups can also help prevent environmental damage," he added.

This project is currently in its first phase in Mandya, where the initial distribution has been made to ASHA workers. "The ASHA workers will visit households to provide information about the menstrual cups," he noted.

- Kharge the Sakhi Suraksha represents an important stride in upholding women's dignity. ASHA workers received the first phase of distribution and are now set to begin household visits

Plans are underway for future distributions to Anganwadi workers and helpers, female school staff, women members of the Gram Panchayat, and staff of women's cooperative societies.

"Menstruation is not impure, nor is it a cause for embarrassment. Menstruation is a speciality of nature," Kharge affirmed. *—PTI*

5,000 students sign up for State's new 'study abroad' programme

BENGALURU, 16 AUG

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Over 5,000 students have already registered for the government's ambitious "study abroad" initiative through the Karnataka Vocational Training and Skill Development Corporation (KVTSDC), the Department of Skill Development said on Saturday.

Encouraging more participation, the department announced that students can still enroll by attending the day-long "Study Abroad Expo" at Hotel Lalit Ashok on 17 August.

Over 60 international universities offering attractive academic opportunities for State students have already camped at the venue, officials said.

To ease financial concerns, several public and private banks have set up stalls offering education loans at competitive interest rates, an official release said.

Public undertaking by the Karnataka bank has assured the government of the most student-friendly financial packages.

"Studying abroad is no longer a privilege reserved for the wealthy. With our government's initiative, even students from economically weaker backgrounds can now pursue higher education overseas without financial burden. This is the first-of-its-kind initiative in India making global education accessible to all sections of society," said Minister for Skill Development, Entrepreneurship and Livelihood Sharanaprakash Patil.

- Over 60 international universities offering attractive academic opportunities for State students have already camped at the Hotel Lalit Ashok in City, officials said.

Unlike private programmes that stops support once students leave India, the government-backed scheme guarantees continued assistance abroad-covering welfare, academic progress, and legal aid, the release said.

The expo also ensures transparency, offering free guidance from university selection to post-departure support, without agency fees, it added.

—Salar News with agencies

PHOTO: PTI

PM praising RSS is an insult to I Day: Vijayan

T'PURAM, 16 AUG

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for "glorifying" the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in his Independence Day speech, calling it an insult to the freedom struggle. Vijayan said Modi's praise amounted to attributing the nation's independence to an organisation banned after Modi, a former RSS pracharak, had hailed the organisation's centenary as "a very proud and glorious page" and lauded its volunteers. Vijayan also linked the remarks to the Union Petroleum Ministry's Independence Day card, which placed VD Savarkar's image above Gandhi's, calling it part of a "vast conspiracy," *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

State mourning in Nagaland over Guv's death

KOHIMA, 16 AUG

Nagaland has declared seven days of state mourning following the death of Governor La Ganesan. The National Flag will fly at half-mast and no official entertainment will be held, the Home Department said. Ganesan, 80, died on Friday night at a private hospital in Chennai, where he had been in intensive care after collapsing at his home on 8 August and sustaining a head injury. He had been due to return to Nagaland this week after spending time in Chennai. President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio and several other leaders expressed condolences. Appointed Nagaland's 21st governor on 12 February, 2023, Ganesan assumed office on 20 February. *—PTI*

Bhupender Yadav defends renaming R'than district

JAIPUR, 16 AUG

Union Minister Bhupender Yadav has strongly defended the Rajasthan government approving a proposal to rename Khairthal-Tijara district as Bhartrihari Nagar and alleged that Congress was opposing the move out of its "anti-Ram" mindset. Following the Chief Minister's approval, the proposal will be sent to the cabinet for its nod and a notification will be issued. The BJP MP from Alwar Lok Sabha seat alleged that those protesting the move were the same people who had opposed Ram Janmabhoomi movement and supported Babri mosque. He said that Baba Bhartrihari is revered by people widely, and they are not the supporters of opposition party.*—PTI*

ED raids TN Minister and son in money laundering case

Raid an attempt to divert attention from 'vote chori', says DMK

CHENNAI, 16 AUG

The Enforcement Directorate on Saturday searched multiple premises in Chennai and Dindigul linked to Tamil Nadu Minister and DMK leader I Periyasamy and his MLA son as part of a money laundering investigation.

The premises of IP Sentilkumar, the son of the 72-year-old minister for rural development, panchayats and panchayat unions, were also searched. Periyasamy represents the Athoor assembly constituency in Dindigul district.

The money laundering investigation stems from a Madras High Court order, which directed a special court in Dindigul to frame charges against Periyasamy and his family members in connection with a Rs 2.1 crore "disproportionate" assets case.

The order came in response to some criminal revision petitions filed by the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption,challenging a special court order discharging Periyasamy and his family members from the case.

The HC also directed the sp cial court to conduct the trial within six months.

The prosecution's case was that Periyasamy had amassed wealth to the tune of Rs 2.1 crore in his name and in the names of his wife, P Suseela, and sons P Sentilkumar and P Prabhu, disproportionate to his known sources of income when he was a minister between 2006 and 2010.

The ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu said that the ED raid was an attempt to divert attention from 'vote chori,' a term coined by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over alleged electoral fraud in the 2024 elections that the BJP-led NDA won.

DMK Organisation Secretary RS Bharathi said the party would "neither fear the ED nor Modi." The BJP was using empowered and autonomous bodies as its "election instruments".Senior DMK leader Kanimozhi said central agencies like the Income Tax Department and the ED have been "weaponised" by the BJP against the opposition. *—PTI*

A security personnel stands guard as ED searched premises linked to Tamil Nadu Minister I Periyasamy and his family in Dindigul on Saturday. Inset: I Periyasamy *PHOTO: PTI*

DWARKA EXPRESS

TRAVEL FROM NOIDA TO DELHI AIRPORT IN 20 MINUTES

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Delhi section of the Dwarka Expressway and Urban Extension Road-II (UER-II) on Sunday in Rohini. The projects aim to ease traffic congestion in the capital. Here is all you need to know about

A TIME SAVER Noida to Indira Gandhi International Airport in just 20 minutes. | Earlier travel time: 1 hour.

ROUTE & REACH Total Length: 29 km | In Delhi: 10.1 km | In Haryana: 18.9 km

Connects: Mahipalpur (Delhi) to Kherki Daula (Gurugram)

PROJECT COST 9,000 crore

ROAD FEATURES 8-lane grade-separated highway. | 3-lane service roads on both sides. | Multi-level interchanges & underpasses.

THREE TYPES OF LANES:
1. 75% of elevated expressway.
2. Surface roads.
3. Underpasses.

Rahul to start 16-day 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' in Bihar

SASARAM, 16 AUG

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will embark on a 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' across Bihar from here on 17 August, with his party asserting it will fight for the "one man, one vote" principle and not accept the Election Commission becoming a "compartment" of the BJP's "so-called double engine".

The leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha, along with the RJD's Tejashwi Yadav and other Mahagathbandhan leaders, will undertake the 16-day and 1,300 km yatra from Sasaram that will conclude with a rally in Patna on 1 September.

The party has been protesting against the special intensive revision of electoral rolls, alleging the EC's exercise is aimed at "disenfranchising voters" in Bihar.

The Congress urged the people of Bihar to join the yatra for their rights and entitlements so that democracy can get a direction from Bihar.

The Congress also released a new video titled 'laapata vote' on its official social media account on Saturday.

In the video, a man is seen pleading in the police station that his "vote has been stolen" and tells the officials there that "lakhs of votes are being stolen", leaving the police personnel wondering if their vote has also been "stolen".

The Indian Youth Congress also launched a nationwide campaign to verify voter rolls at the booth level.

The EC will hold a press conference on Sunday amid allegations of "vote theft" and relentless protest by opposition parties over the intensive electoral roll revision in Bihar. The poll panel had sought an apology from Gandhi if he failed to give an undertaking to back his allegations. The Supreme Court asked the EC to submit details of people whose names are not in the voters' list. *—PTI*

Investors to get 'economic package' in Bihar

PATNA, 16 AUG

Bihar is gearing up for a political and economic churn ahead of the Assembly elections, with both government and opposition making strong pitches. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Saturday unveiled a set of "special economic packages" to attract investment and generate employment.

He said the government aims to create one crore jobs over the next five years, after previously employing 50 lakh youths under the Seven Resolves-2 initiative.

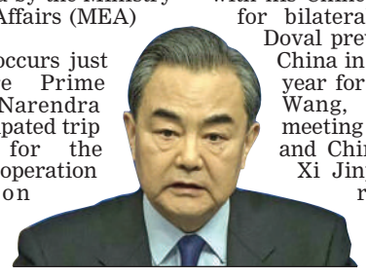
Meanwhile, Jan Suraaj party founder Prashant Kishor vowed to defeat the BJP by forging an alliance between Gandhi-Ambedkar inspired Hindus and Muslims, unsettling RJD-Congress-Left bloc's minority vote base. *—PTI*

CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER TO VISIT INDIA

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi is set to visit India for two days beginning on Monday to engage in border discussions with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, as announced by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Saturday.

This visit occurs just days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's anticipated trip to China for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit. The primary purpose of Wang's visit is to conduct 24th round of Special Representatives' dialogue on the ongoing boundary issue between India and China.



Alongside the border talks, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will also meet with his Chinese counterpart for bilateral discussions.

Doval previously visited China in December last year for SR talks with Wang, following a meeting between Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping aimed at reviving dialogue mechanisms. *—PTI*

Want GST 2.0 to be Good and Simple Tax: Cong

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

he Congress on Saturday urged the government to publish an official discussion paper on GST 2.0, stressing it should be a "Good and Simple Tax" rather than the "Growth Suppressing Tax" it has become.

The demand followed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day announcement that GST rates would be reduced by Diwali to make daily essentials cheaper and support MSMEs. He said "next-generation reforms" would simplify the tax regime.

Congress communications chief Jairam Ramesh said the party had long called for a transformed GST, as promised in its 2024 manifesto. He argued growth cannot revive without simplifying rates, curbing disputes, and extending the GST compensation cess beyond 2026.

He also urged measures to ease compliance for MSMEs, resolve sectoral issues in textiles, tourism and agriculture, and incentivise states to bring fuel, alcohol and real estate under GST. *—PTI*

India holds 'productive' talks with South Korea

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

India and South Korea have committed to enhancing their strategic partnership, focusing on cooperation in semiconductors, clean energy, defence, and artificial intelligence.

During discussions between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his visiting South Korean counterpart, Cho Hyun, the two countries explored ways to increase bilateral cooperation in trade, manufacturing, maritime affairs, and people-to-people exchanges.

Jaishankar remarked, "Held productive discussions on advancing our bilateral cooperation... as well as new opportunities in AI, semiconductors, clean energy and defence." He also expressed appreciation for South Korea's condemnation of the recent Pahalgam terror attack and acknowledged Seoul's support during an Indian parliamentary delegation's visit after Operation Sindoor.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with South Korea Foreign Affairs Minister Cho Hyun, during a meeting, in New Delhi *PHOTO: PTI*

As their Special Strategic Partnership marks its 10th anniversary, Jaishankar noted, "Appreciated our deepening convergences and growing engagement," highlighting the significance of the relationship, especially with Cho's visit occurring shortly after both nations' National Days. *—PTI*

A TEARFUL GOODBYE

Jharkhand Minister no more; last rites held

RANCHI, 16 AUG

The mortal remains of Jharkhand Education Minister Ramdas Soren, who died on 15 August while undergoing treatment at a hospital in Delhi, were taken to his constituency Ghatshila on Saturday afternoon.

Political leaders, party workers and common citizens paid him tributes at Mau Bhandar Maidan in Ghatshila. The last rites of the minister were performed at his native place at Ghorabanda in Jamshedpur.

The body of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader was brought to Ranchi this morning and kept on the assembly premises for people to pay homage. Jharkhand Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar, Speaker Rabindra Nath Mahato, Leader of Opposition Babulal Marandi, and ministers paid tributes to him.

Mortal remains of Jharkhand Education Minister Ramdas Soren being taken to Ghatshila *PHOTO: PTI*

The governor also met the bereaved family members and expressed his condolences.

Transport, Revenue and Land Reforms Minister Deepak Birua paid homage to Ramdas Soren on behalf of Chief Minister Hemant Soren, who was in Ramgarh district for 'Shraddh' of his father and former CM Shibu Soren.

Soren was a sepoy and crusader of the separate Jharkhand movement. Later, he became an MLA and then the Minister for School Education and Literacy Department.

He was airlifted to the hospital in Delhi from Jamshedpur after he fell in the bathroom of his residence on 2 August. His condition was critical and he was on life support. The Jharkhand government declared a state mourning on Saturday to mark Soren's death. The National Flag will be flown at half-mast in government building. *—PTI*

'Proof of YouTuber Jyoti spying for Pakistan found'

HARYANA, 16 AUG

After three months of investigation, police have found solid evidence on YouTuber Jyoti Malhotra stating her to be a spy for Pakistan, and a chargesheet of 2,500 pages has been filed, said sources.

According to sources, the chargesheet states that the Hisar police have found that Malhotra has been acting as Pakistan's spy for a long period.

Her ties with Ehsan-ur-Rahim, ISI agents Shakir, Hasan Ali and Nasir Dhillon were also cited in the chargesheet, said sources.

According to the chargesheet, on 17 April, 2024, she visited Pakistan and returned on 15 May, and later on 10 June, just 25 days after her Pakistan visit, Malhotra travelled to China and stayed til July before leaving for Nepal.

Sources said that Malhotra, during her Pakistan visit, met with the Chief Minister of Punjab, Pakistan, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, for an interview.

The 33-year-old YouTuber was arrested in Hisar, Haryana, in May, for spying for Pakistan, sources said.

According to a Haryana police officer, during the Pahalgam terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir, Malhotra had been in contact with a Pakistan High Commission officer in New Delhi.

Sources said that she however, had no direct access to information on military operations. *—Agencies*

Keralite in US booked for FB post 'insulting' tricolour

KOCHI, 16 AUG

A non-resident Keralite living in the United States has been booked for allegedly insulting the Indian national flag in a Facebook post, police said on Saturday. Edathala Police in Ernakulam registered a case against Albichan Muringayil, originally from Kottayam, following a complaint lodged by Anoop, a local BJP functionary. According to police, Muringayil shared a derogatory post about the national flag on Independence Day. His Facebook account also reportedly carried several other posts insulting India and the national pledge. He has been charged under the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act. The case will be transferred to the Cyber Police for further investigation, officials confirmed. *—PTI*

Shubhanshu Shukla to return to India on 17 Aug

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

Astronaut Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla will return to India on 17 August after his landmark mission to the International Space Station. Shukla, who spent a year in the US training for the Axiom-4 mission, will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi before travelling to his hometown Lucknow. He will attend National Space Day celebrations in New Delhi on 22–23 August. Sharing a farewell post on Instagram, he said he was leaving the US with "mixed emotions" but was eager to reunite with family, friends, and the nation. During the space mission, Shukla conducted over 60 experiments and 20 outreach sessions with his crewmates.*—PTI*

ISRO space laboratory opened in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, 16 AUG

Arunachal Pradesh Education Minister Pasang Dorjee Sona on Friday inaugurated a state-of-the-art space laboratory at Mechuka in Shi-Yomi district. Set up at Mechuka Government Higher Secondary School in collaboration with the Indian Space Research Organisation and Muskaan Foundation, the facility will provide students with hands-on experience in space science and technology, encouraging innovation and scientific curiosity. Named the Pasang Wangchuk Sona ISRO Space Laboratory, it honours the minister's late father for his belief in the transformative power of education. Calling the occasion "emotional and proud", Sona said the lab would serve as a hub for learning and inspire children to "dream bigger and explore science fearlessly". Students, teachers and local and community leaders attended the event.*—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

'Homebound' wins best film, director at IFFM awards

MELBOURNE, 16 AUG

Filmmaker Neeraj Ghaywan's moving drama Homebound dominated the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM) 2025, winning Best Film and Best Director. Starring Ishaan Khatter, Vishal Jetwa and Janhvi Kapoor, the film explores themes of belonging and displacement, and will also close the festival on 24 August. Bollywood icon Aamir Khan received the Excellence in Cinema Award for his decades of contribution, while Abhishek Bachchan was named Best Actor (Male) for I Want to Talk. Geetha Kailasam won Best Actor (Female) for Angammal, which also secured Best Indie Film. On the streaming front, Vikramaditya Motwane's Black Warrant was awarded Best Series. Other honours went to Vir Das, Aditi Rao Hydari and Arvind Swamy.*—PTI*

Heavy rains batter Mumbai, suburbs

Mumbai on red alert for very heavy rains; orange alert sounded in five Kerala districts

MUMBAI, 16 AUG

Heavy downpour pummelled Mumbai and its suburbs, with some parts recording more than 200 mm rainfall on Saturday, inundating low-lying areas and affecting the movement of local trains.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a red alert in the metropolis for two days. Citizens were advised not to step out unnecessarily.

Two people were killed and as many others sustained injuries in a landslide amid rains in the Vikhroli Parksite area in the eastern suburbs. Locals alleged that thr civic authorities had not sent any prior notice to evacuate this landslide prone area.

The downpour caused waterlogging in low-lying areas of the western and eastern suburbs, including Vikhroli, Ghatkopar, Bhandup, Chunabhatti, Aarey, Andheri, Kings Circle, Malad, and Goregaon, among others.

The suburban train services were also severely affected due to waterlogging on tracks at several locations on the Central and Western Railway lines.Bus operations were also affected, as several buses were diverted from waterlogged areas.

Passengers have complained that Harbour Line services continue to be badly affected.

Most government and private establishments in the city have declared a holiday for the Dahi Handi festivities.

An orange alert was issued in Ernakulam, Idukki, Thrissur, Kannur and Kasaragod districts of Kerala for Saturday, while a yellow alert was sounded for nine other districts. There is also likelihood of strong winds along with rains in the state.

Heavy rains triggered landslides and inundated major roads in Odisha's Koraput and Malkangiri districts. Interstate vehicular movement between Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh was severely affected with the flooding of the national highway.

Moderate to heavy rain with thunderstorms were forecast in Rajasthan's Udaipur, Jodhpur, Kota, Ajmer, Jaipur, Bharatpur and Bikaner division. At

A man with a cylinder cart wades through a waterlogged road following heavy rainfall, in Nala Sopara in Mumbai on Saturday PHOTO: PTI

Rescue operations continue in J&K's Kishtwar

KISHTWAR/JAMMU, 16 AUG

A coordinated rescue and relief operation continued for the third consecutive day on Saturday in a remote village in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district, where 60 people lost their lives and over 100 others were injured.

Union Minister Jitendra Singh, accompanied by Jammu and Kashmir director general of police, Nalin Prabhat, visited the devastated village and reviewed ongoing rescue and relief efforts.

46 bodies were handed over to their next of kin. Meanwhile, 75 persons were reported missing, although hundreds were feared to have been swept away by flash floods and buried under debris.

At least 16 residential houses and government buildings, three temples, four water mills, a 30-meter-long bridge, and over a dozen vehicles were also damaged in the flash floods. The anger of people seeking information about their kin missing in the aftermath of a cloudburst is quite understandable, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said as locals confronted him in disaster-hit Chasoti and vented their frustration

- 46 bodies were handed over to their next of kin. Meanwhile, 75 persons were reported missing, although hundreds were feared to have been swept away by flash floods and buried under debris. Rescue operations are underway to trace the people who are missing.

An immediate relief of Rs 36 lakh was distributed among those affected. He said hpuses will be built for them. *—PTI*

Kerala minor girl dies of amoebic encephalitis

KOZHIKODE, 16 AUG

Amoebic encephalitis, a rare brain infection, was found to be the cause of a nine-year-old girl's death two days ago in Kozhikode district in Kerala, health officials confirmed on Saturday.

This infection is caused by a free-living amoeba found in contaminated waters, they added.

A senior health official said that the girl was admitted to the Kozhikode Taluk Hospital due to fever on 13 August. However, as her condition worsened quickly, she was shifted to the Kozhikode Medical College on 14 August for better treatment. However, she died the same day.

A test carried out at the microbiology lab of the medical college on 15 August revealed that the cause of the girl's death was amoebic encephalitis, the official said.

The child was the daughter of daughter of Sanoop from Anappara Poyil in Thamarassery in Kozhikode.

The search is on to identify the water body, such as a pond or lake, from where the child, a resident of Thamarassery, contracted the pathogen, he said.

Meanwhile, the family of the girl alleged that she died as she did not receive proper treatment in the hospital. Her two siblings and a classmate are also being treated for fever.

The official said it was probably the fourth case of the rare brain infection reported from the district this year.

Amoebic encephalitis is a deadly infection that is typically spreads through tiny openings near the nose and eardrum. *—PTI/ Agencies*

2 kids found dead in parked car in Pune

PATNA, 16 AUG

In a shocking incident in Patna, Bihar, police discovered the bodies of two children—a nine-year-old girl and a five-year-old boy—inside a parked car in the Indrapuri area on Friday evening. Patna (Central) SP Diksha stated, "Police received information that the bodies of two children... were found inside a car in Indrapuri locality. They are trying to ascertain the identity of the children." The bodies have been sent for post-mortem examination to determine the cause of death.

According to Law and Order DSP 2, Muhibullah Ansari, "A call was received on 112; one of them was alive when police arrived. The child was rushed to the hospital, however, couldn't survive." Investigations are underway to determine the ownership of the vehicle.

In a separate incident, the charred remains of two siblings, Anjali Kumari (15) and Anshul Kumar (10), were found in their Janipur home on 31 July, with police exploring all angles and family alleging foul play. *—Agencies*

MAKHAN CHORI

A Govinda team formed 10 layers of a human pyramid at a Dahi Handi event in Thane in Maharashtra on Saturday on Janmastami. Maharashtra Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik claimed this was a 'world record' PHOTO: ANI

T'gana 'illegal' human egg trading racket busted

HYDERABAD, 16 AUG

Cyberabad police have exposed a racket involving commercial surrogacy and illegal human egg trading, allegedly linked to several fertility centres in Hyderabad.

A 45-year-old woman and her 27-year-old son were arrested after a raid in Pet-Basheerabad, conducted with the District Medical and Health Officer. Notices were also issued to six egg donors and surrogate mothers.

Police said the prime accused, once an egg donor and surrogate herself, used her contacts to recruit financially vulnerable women for fertility procedures. She housed them at her residence, collected maintenance fees from hospitals, and profited from each procedure.

Her son, a chemical engineering graduate, allegedly assisted in the business, which was their sole income.

Cases were registered under the Surrogacy Regulation Act, ART Act, and BNS Act. *—PTI*

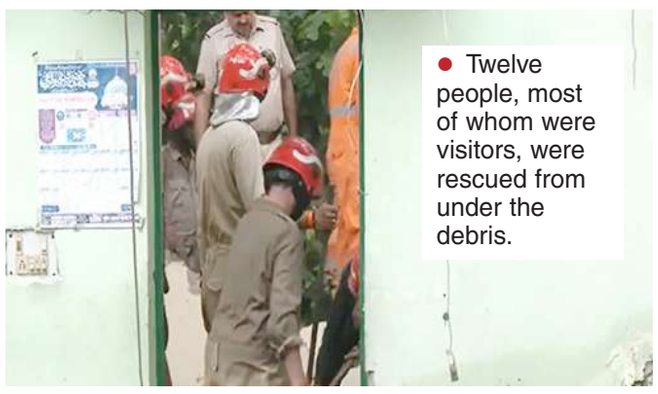
Police officials briefing the media PHOTO: X/Cyberabad Police

Death toll in dargah collapse near Humayun Tomb rises to 7

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

The death toll from the collapse of a structure at Dargah Sharif Patte Shah, near Humayun's Tomb in Delhi, has risen to seven after another victim succumbed to injuries during treatment. The incident occurred around 3.30pm on Friday, with the deceased comprising four men and three women.

Deputy Commissioner of Police Hemant Tiwari reported that five victims have been identified, including 79-year-old Swaroop Chand, and 58-year-old Anita Saini. "Twelve people, most of whom were visitors, were rescued from under the debris," Tiwari stated, adding that five died at the AIIMS Trauma Centre.



- Twelve people, most of whom were visitors, were rescued from under the debris.

The rooms inside the dargah were in a dilapdated state, with heavy rain triggering the collapse PHOTO: ANI

A case was registered for death caused by negligence. The dargah's two rooms were described as being in a dilapidated state, with heavy rain leading to the collapse. *—PTI*

Man held for 1999 murder in Saudi

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

A man on the run for over 26 years was apprehended by the CBI earlier this week at Indira Gandhi International Airport for a 1999 murder in Saudi Arabia. Mohammad Dilshad was arrested on 11 August after returning from Madinah via Jeddah under a false identity.

Dilshad, a former heavy motor mechanic and security guard in Riyadh, allegedly murdered an individual in 1999 before fleeing to India, where he assumed a new identity and passport through deceitful means. The CBI took up the case in 2022. *—PTI*

Lineman electrocuted in UP; family protests

KANNAUJ, 16 AUG

A contractual lineman, Brajesh Rathore, died from an electric shock in Pungra village, Uttar Pradesh's Kannauj.

The incident occurred while he was attempting to repair a power line when the supply was inadvertently restored. Despite being rushed to Government Medical College in Tirwa, he was declared dead.

Rathore's family protested by blocking the road outside the Tirwa Power House with his body for two hours, leading to clashes with police.

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Officers attempted to remove the body, which resulted in a scuffle. SP leaderAkhilesh Yadav called for compensation to the family. *—PTI*

Family held hostage in taxi, cabbie outruns Noida cops

NOIDA, 16 AUG

A cab driver was arrested after allegedly holding a family "hostage" during a chaotic ride, as Noida Police pursued the speeding vehicle for jumping barricades. A distressing video shared on social media depicted the incident, showing a terrified four-year-old girl crying while her parents begged the driver to stop.

Sanjay Mohan booked a cab for Delhi's Connaught Place, but when police signalled the driver to halt at Parthala Bridge, he instead sped away, ignoring the family's pleas. After evading police for several kilometres, he briefly stopped at TP Nagar, allowing the family to escape before fleeing.

Police apprehended the driver, identified as Nasim. A case was registered, with charges including kidnapping and rash driving. "The Wagon R was seized, and a challan of Rs 29,500 issued," he added. The couple were injured. *—PTI*

The driver after his arrest in Noida PHOTO: X/NOIDA POLICE

- Sanjay Mohan booked a cab for Delhi's Connaught Place, but when police signalled the driver to halt at Parthala Bridge, he instead sped away.

ONLINE FRAUD

Woman tries to buy milk, loses Rs 18.5 lakh

PHOTO: AI

MUMBAI, 16 AUG

A woman from Mumbai allegedly lost Rs 18.5 lakh from her bank accounts while attempting to order a litre of milk online.

The 70-year-old woman, a resident of Wadala, was allegedly duped of her entire bank savings in two days when she attempted to order milk from an online delivery app earlier this month, a police official said.

On 4 August, the woman received a call from a man identifying himself as Deepak, an executive from the milk company, who sent a link to her mobile phone number asking her to furnish her details to order milk.

The woman was instructed to click on the link without disconnecting the call and follow further instructions. As the call went on for more than an hour, the complainant got bored and decided to hang up.

The next day, the complainant received a phone call from the same accused, who gathered more details from her.

During a routine bank visit in the following days, the complainant discovered that Rs 1.7 lakh had been siphoned off from one of her accounts, and on checking further, she found that her other two bank accounts had also been emptied.

According to the police, the complainant lost Rs 18.5 lakh as all three bank accounts were emptied.

The accused allegedly managed to hack into the complainant's phone after she clicked on the link he sent to her mobile phone. The police have registered a case. *—PTI*

SOARING SKY HIGH

For the first time ever, the Indian tricolour was hoisted atop Seattle's iconic 605-foot Space Needle on India's 79th Independence Day, marking a historic moment. The celebration included a community reception at Kerry Park and official proclamations declaring 15 August as India Day across King County and major cities. Several Seattle landmarks, including Lumen Stadium and the Seattle Great Wheel, were lit in the tricolours
PHOTO: PTI

Despite Ukraine war, US rolls out red carpet for Putin

The highly anticipated summit between US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin concluded on Friday with warm gestures but no concrete agreements to end the war in Ukraine. Held at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage, Alaska, the meeting lasted approximately two and a half hours and ended with a short press appearance that offered little detail on any diplomatic breakthroughs.

Despite the failure to secure a ceasefire or concrete plan for peace, both leaders described the talks as "productive." However, the lack of substantive outcomes was evident, and neither leader took questions from the press, cutting short what had been billed as a joint news conference.

President Donald Trump listens as Russia's President Vladimir Putin speaks during a news conference at Joint Base Elmendorf- Richardson, in Anchorage, Alaska
PHOTO: PTI

A red carpet welcome and friendly optics

The summit began with a warm reception for Putin, underscoring the close rapport he and Trump continue to share. Putin received a red carpet welcome upon arrival and was driven from the tarmac to the summit venue in Trump's presidential limousine.

Joining the two leaders at the talks were top aides: US Secretary of State and National Security Adviser Marco Rubio, and special envoy Steve Witkoff for Trump. Representing Russia were Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and national security adviser Yuri Ushakov.

During the post-meeting comments, Putin spoke first and praised the historical ties between the United States, Russia, and the former Soviet Union.

He recalled joint missions from World War II and used the moment to stress shared values between the two nations — a familiar Russian line aimed at appealing to Trump and his inner circle.

Putin also referenced Trump's long-standing claim that the Ukraine war would not have happened had he won the 2020 election. "I think that would have been the case," Putin said, a comment likely to resonate with Trump supporters. However, there is no way to verify whether Moscow's actions in Ukraine would have differed under a second Trump presidency.

Trump admits no deal reached

Trump entered the summit with hopes of persuading Putin to commit to a ceasefire in Ukraine or at least agree to open negotiations. Instead, he conceded they had fallen short.

"We haven't quite got there," Trump said. "We had an extremely productive meeting and many points were agreed to, there are just a very few that are left."

While claiming that "significant progress" had been made, Trump offered no details. He stated that the next steps would include consulting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and NATO leaders.

In a subsequent interview with Fox News host Sean Hannity, Trump reiterated that progress had been made but again provided no specifics.

"There's no deal until there's a deal," Trump said.

Time appears to favour Putin

The drawn-out diplomatic process seems to be working in Putin's favour. Now three and a half years into the war, Russian forces continue to slowly gain ground in eastern Ukraine, benefitting from their superior numbers and the lack of a unified Western strategy.

Putin emerged from the talks with a positive public reception and without having to make any visible concessions. He praised the friendly tone of the discussions and said Trump had shown an "understanding that Russia has its own national interests."

Notably, Trump made no public mention of the thousands of Ukrainian civilians killed in Moscow's continued assaults. Putin suggested that the next meeting could take place in Moscow, chuckling as he extended the informal invitation.

Putin used the occasion to call for the US and Russia to "turn the page" on years of Cold War-style tensions, positioning his US visit as a symbol of Russia's return to the global diplomatic stage.

For Putin, it was his first visit to the United States in a decade. Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova highlighted the moment on social media, boasting that Western media were "losing their minds" over Putin's red carpet treatment.

"For three years, they talked about Russia's isolation, and today they saw the red carpet being rolled out to greet the Russian president in the United States," she wrote.

No concrete outcomes or commitments

The summit's press event was brief — lasting less than 15 minutes — and failed to deliver any major announcements. Both leaders repeated diplomatic platitudes and avoided addressing hard facts or providing timelines for future talks.

Trump, who frequently avoids taking questions from the press in international settings, ended the event abruptly, which some analysts viewed as a sign of disappointment.

Although the president had initially said there was a 25 per cent chance the summit would fail, he had expressed hope it could lay the groundwork for a follow-up meeting involving Zelenskyy. He had even floated the idea of hosting a three-way summit in Alaska if discussions with Putin proved fruitful.

At this point, it remains unclear what steps will follow. With no details on ceasefire plans, future negotiations, or even a confirmed timeline for another meeting, the summit closed with more questions than answers. *—PTI*

SALAR سالار

U'khand flash flood forms temporary lake in river

A team of geological experts on Friday explained how a temporary lake was formed in the Bhagirathi River following the recent flash floods in Uttarkashi's Dharali village, which also caused large-scale damage to the neighbouring Harshil town.

Efforts are underway at present to manually puncture the lake to facilitate outflow of water in a phased and controlled manner to prevent flooding downstream.

The team conducted a geological inspection of the disaster-affected areas of both Dharali and Harshil, studied the possible dangers and measures for rescue, an official release here said.

The team observed that a local stream named Telgad in Harshil near the Army camp became active due to heavy rainfall during the August 5 disaster, in which, according to the administration, one person died and 68 others are missing.

The camp bore the brunt of the disaster, which demolished structures besides leaving nine of its personnel missing, including a junior commissioned officer and eight jawans.

A large amount of debris and water came and accumulated in the stream at its point of confluence with the Bhagirathi River and formed a large fan-shaped deposit (alluvial fan) of sediments, the team of experts said.

This fan obstructed the original channel of the Bhagirathi River and formed a temporary lake on the right bank of the river.

The length of the newly formed lake was about 1,500 metres, and its estimated depth was 12 to 15 feet.

The length of the newly formed lake was about 1,500 metres, and its estimated depth was 12 to 15 feet
PHOTO: PTI

The flooding not only submerged a portion of the national highway and a helipad, but also posed a serious threat to Harshil town.

This event also significantly altered the topography of the Bhagirathi River, as the sand dune located on the right bank was eroded, while fresh sediment was deposited on the left side, exposing the northern part of the town.

The continued bedrock erosion in this area had already caused partial structural damage to the camp, including the loss of a portion of the Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam Guest House.

Inspection by the geological team on August 12 revealed that the left bank of the Bhagirathi River was blocked by a saturated alluvial fan.

Due to its high moisture content, the fan was weak, which prevented heavy machinery such as JCBs from being deployed — the only equipment available locally.

Based on the field data and available resources, the geologists prepared a plan for debris clearance and partial restoration of water flow.

The plan involved creating small diversion channels of about 9-12 inches deep to gradually release the stagnant water.

During discussions with Uttarkashi District Magistrate Prashant Arya and Inspector General (SDRF) Arun Mohan Joshi, it was emphasised that the lake outflow channels should be opened in three or four stages to avoid sudden flooding downstream.

Work was immediately started by the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and the Irrigation Department, Uttarkashi. Through careful execution of the plan on two successive days, the teams engaged in the exercise were able to facilitate controlled water drainage from the lake. *—PTI*

The water flowing smoothly from the mouth of the Harsil lake, in Uttarkashi
PHOTO: ANI

LETTERS

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Drinking very hot drinks may raise oesophageal cancer risk

- Other studies from Asia, the Middle East and Africa have supported this finding, suggesting a consistent association between very hot drinks and increased cancer risk. Until recently, however, data from Western countries were limited

If you regularly ask for your coffee "extra hot" or enjoy a steaming cup of tea, you may want to think twice.

While hot drinks offer comfort and are part of many daily rituals, new evidence suggests that drinking beverages that are too hot could increase your risk of developing cancer, specifically of the oesophagus, or "food pipe."

The link between hot drinks and cancer

The connection between hot drinks and cancer isn't new.

In 2016, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), part of the World Health Organization, classified drinking very hot beverages, above 65°C, as "probably carcinogenic to humans."

This classification places hot drinks in the same risk category as indoor wood smoke or excessive consumption of red meat.

Importantly, the risk comes not from the drinks themselves, but from their temperature. The IARC's conclusions were based largely on studies from South America, where people commonly drink mate, a traditional herbal tea typically consumed at around 70°C. The research found a higher incidence of oesophageal cancer among those who frequently drank mate at very hot temperatures.

Scientists believe that very hot drinks damage the cells lining the oesophagus
PHOTO: PIXABABY

Other studies from Asia, the Middle East and Africa have supported this finding, suggesting a consistent association between very hot drinks and increased cancer risk. Until recently, however, data from Western countries were limited.

New evidence from the UK

Earlier this year, a large-scale UK study offered new insights. The research involved nearly half a million adults and found that people who drank eight or more cups of very hot tea or coffee a day were almost six times more likely to develop oesophageal cancer compared to those who did not drink hot drinks.

This study adds weight to the growing evidence that repeated exposure of the oesophagus to very high temperatures can cause long-term damage.

How hot drinks can lead to cancer

Scientists believe that very hot drinks damage the cells lining the oesophagus.

Over time, repeated injury can lead to cancer. This idea was first proposed nearly 90 years ago, and modern research continues to support it.

One animal study from 2016 observed mice that were genetically predisposed to cancer. Mice given water at 70°C developed precancerous growths in the oesophagus more frequently and more quickly than those given cooler water.

Another possible explanation is that heat damage weakens the protective lining of the oesophagus. This may make it more vulnerable to other risks, such as stomach acid reflux. Chronic damage from both heat and acid could create the conditions for cancer to develop.

Does quantity matter?

How much hot liquid you drink, and how quickly you drink it, also appear to influence risk.

In a study where researchers monitored the internal temperature of the oesophagus during hot drink consumption, they discovered that the size of the sip mattered more than the temperature itself. A large sip of coffee at 65°C raised the oesophageal temperature by as much as 12°C.

This suggests that repeatedly drinking large sips of very hot beverages can lead to sustained injury over time. While an occasional hot drink is unlikely to cause harm, years of drinking large amounts of very hot tea or coffee may significantly increase cancer risk.

What's a safe temperature?

Coffee and tea are often brewed at temperatures close to boiling point. In many takeaway outlets, hot drinks may be served at temperatures around 90°C, allowing for them to cool before consumption.

However, one study from the United States calculated the ideal drinking temperature for coffee as 57.8°C. This temperature was found to balance flavour and safety, reducing the risk of heat damage to the oesophagus while still providing a satisfying cup.

Tips for safer sipping

If you enjoy hot drinks, there are several simple ways to protect your health without giving them up.

1. Slow down – Allow hot drinks to cool for several minutes before drinking. Research shows the temperature can drop by 10 to 15°C in just five minutes.
2. Stir and blow – Stirring your drink and blowing on it helps speed up cooling.
3. Take the lid off – Removing the lid from a takeaway cup allows the drink to cool twice as fast.
4. Add cold water or milk – Mixing in a little cool liquid can quickly bring the temperature down.
5. Take small sips – This helps test the temperature and reduces the risk of heat injury to the oesophagus. Large gulps increase internal temperatures much more significantly.

Final thought

Hot drinks are a cherished part of daily life for many, but it's important to be mindful of how hot they are.

While the occasional hot tea or coffee is unlikely to cause harm, regularly consuming beverages above 65°C, especially in large quantities, could carry a serious health risk over time.

Being aware of temperature, and making small adjustments to how we enjoy our drinks, could make a big difference to our long-term health. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

No hearing for fired US Air Force trans troops

WASHINGTON, 16 AUG

The US Air Force has issued a memo stating that transgender airmen discharged under a recent Trump administration directive will no longer have the right to argue their case before a peer board. The memo asserts that military separation boards must recommend discharge for any airman diagnosed with gender dysphoria, effectively bypassing the board's traditional role in retaining valued members. Military lawyers deem the change unlawful, asserting it undermines impartiality and could lead to widespread ramifications across the military. "This instruction... essentially says you will not make a determination of whether somebody has future potential," said Priya Rashid, an Air Force attorney. *—PTI*

Peru claims sovereignty over Amazonian island

LIMA, 15 AUG

Peruvian President Dina Boluarte visited the contested Santa Rosa Island, affirming Peru's "unquestionable sovereignty" amid diplomatic tensions with Colombia. Boluarte's first visit followed Colombian President Gustavo Petro's recent claims of jurisdiction over the territory. "Peru's sovereignty is not in dispute; the district of Santa Rosa de Loreto is Peruvian and will remain so," she declared. The situation escalated after Peruvian police arrested three Colombian men surveying the land. Colombia condemned the arrests as "kidnapping". The conflict intensified with a Colombian military aircraft planted its flag therethere, later removed by Peruvian police. Approximately 3,000 residents live on the island. *—PTI*

Tri-national reserve to protect Mayan jungle

GUATEMALA CITY, 16 AUG

The leaders of Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize announced the creation of a tri-national nature reserve to safeguard the Mayan rainforest, following recent discussions. The reserve will encompass over 14 million acres (5.7 million hectares) across southern Mexico and northern Central America. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum called it "historic", noting it would be Latin America's second-largest nature reserve after the Amazon. Controversy arose over the proposed expansion of the Maya Train, which currently runs through Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. Guatemalan President Bernardo Arévalo insisted that "the Maya Train will not pass through any protected area". *—PTI*

Thieves steal $2M jewellery in Seattle heist in 2 minutes

SEATTLE, 16 AUG

In a bold midday heist, smash-and-grab thieves in Seattle swiped an estimated USD 2 million in diamonds, luxury watches, gold, and other valuables from a jewellery store in just 90 seconds, police reported on Friday. Surveillance footage from the West Seattle location captured four masked individuals smashing the locked glass door with hammers and ransacking six display cases on Thursday. One case contained around USD 750,000 worth of Rolex watches, while another held a USD 125,000 emerald necklace. "One suspect threatened workers with bear spray and a Taser, but thankfully no one was injured," said a police spokesperson. Josh Menashe, vice president of the family-owned establishment, remarked, "We're gonna be closed for a while". *—PTI*

Trump, Putin fail to stop Ukraine war

Trump says the next step is up to Zelenskyy, hints at three-way meeting

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, 16 AUG

US President Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin failed to reach an agreement for a ceasefire to the Ukraine war, but said they reached an understanding.

In a joint press conference in Alaska on Friday after their two-and-a-half-hour meeting, Putin said the pair had hammered out an "understanding" and warned Europe not to "torpedo the nascent progress."

"There were many, many points that we agreed on. (There) were a couple of big ones that we haven't quite got there, but we had some headway. There's no deal until there's a deal," Trump said.

"We're going to stop, 5,000, 6,000, 7,000 people a week from being killed," Trump added.

"Ukraine... is a brotherly nation; however strange it may sound. We have the same roots, and everything that's happening is a tragedy for us," Putin said. "At the same time, we are convinced that in order to make the settlement lasting and long-term, we need to eliminate all the primary causes of the conflict."

They hinted at a future meeting soon.

"Next time in Moscow?" Putin asked.

"I can see it possibly happening," Trump replied. He said that the next step now rests with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

"It's really up to Zelenskyy to get it done," Trump said. "They're going to set up a meeting between Zelenskyy and Putin and myself".

Trump later wrote on Truth Social, "It was determined that the best way to end the horrific war is to go directly to a Peace Agreement.... and not a mere Ceasefire Agreement, which often times do not hold up." *—PTI*

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Zelenskyy will meet Trump in Washington on Monday where they will "discuss all of the details regarding ending the killing and the war."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov sported a USSR sweatshirt when he arrived in Anchorage, hinting at a Soviet Union consciousness. Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union.

No war if Trump was Prez in 2022: Putin

Putin said that Trump had been in power in 2022, the Russia-Ukraine conflict would likely never have happened -- a claim Trump has made several times, blaming his predecessor, Joe Biden, for the war. Putin said that in 2022, he had cautioned Biden that the tensions between the two nations should not be allowed to reach a point of no return. "When Trump says had he been the President back then, there would have been no war, and I am quite sure it would indeed be so," he said.

US President Donald Trump extended a warm greeting to Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska ***PHOTO: PTI***

WHAT THEY SAID

I think everybody wants to deal with us. We've become the hottest country anywhere in the world in a short period of time. We look forward to that and try to get this over with. We really made some great progress today.... We have a very good chance of getting there. We didn't get there, but we have a very good chance of getting there.

—Donald Trump, US President

(Trump) has a clear idea of what he wants to achieve and sincerely cares about the prosperity of his country, and at the same time shows understanding that Russia has its own national interests.... Today's agreements will become a reference point not only for solving the Ukrainian problem, but will also mark the beginning of the restoration of relations between Russia and the US

—Vladimir Putin, Russian President

Everyone wants an honest end to the war. Ukraine is ready to work as productively as possible to end the war. The war continues and it continues precisely because there is no order, nor any signals from Moscow, that it is preparing to end this war.

—Volodomyr Zelenskyy, Ukrainian President

Trump speaks to Ukrainian, NATO leaders after meet

WASHINGTON, 16 AUG

US President Donald Trump spoke to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy after his summit with Russia's Vladimir Putin in Alaska and also was talking with NATO leaders early Saturday, the White House said.

Zelenskyy describe the call as "long and substantive". He reiterated the importance of involving Europe. "It is important that Europeans are involved at every stage to ensure reliable security guarantees together with America," he said. "We also discussed positive signals from the American side regarding participation in guaranteeing Ukraine's security."

Trump spoke with Zelenskyy, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, Finnish President Alexander Stubb, Polish President Karol Nawrocki, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, European Commission spokesperson Arianna Podesta said. *—PTI*

People carry bodies of victims of the flash floodingat a village near Pir Baba, Buner district, in Pakistan's northwest on Saturday ***PHOTO: PTI***

Death toll from Pak floods touches 307

PESHAWAR, 16 AUG

The death toll from the recent flash floods in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has risen to over 300, including 13 children, provincial authorities confirmed on Saturday. The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) reported that torrential rains, which have led to widespread flooding across various districts, are expected to continue intermittently until 21 August.

According to PDMA Spokesman Faizi, 307 fatalities were recorded in the last 48 hours due to overwhelming rains, cloud bursts, and ensuing flash floods. The tragic toll includes 279 men, 15 women, and 13 children. Additionally, 23 individuals sustained injuries, comprising 17 men, four women, and two children.

The hardest-hit districts are Bajaur, Buner, Swat, Mansehra, Shangla, Torghar, and Batagram, with Buner suffering the brunt of the devastation, reporting 184 deaths. "Relief teams and district administrations are in close coordination and are continuously monitoring the situation," the PDMA stated. *—PTI*

Air Canada flights suspended amid strike

TORONTO, 16 AUG

Air Canada has suspended all operations following a strike by over 10,000 flight attendants, which commenced early on Saturday after contract negotiations failed. The strike occurred after the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) rejected Air Canada's request for government-directed arbitration, which would have stripped them of their right to strike.

CUPE spokesman Hugh Pouliot confirmed, "We're here to bargain a deal, not to go on strike," emphasising the union's willingness to negotiate. Meanwhile, Federal Jobs Minister Patty Hajdu met with both parties on Friday night, stating, "It is unacceptable that such little progress has been made. Canadians are counting on both parties to put forward their best efforts."

The strike, which affects approximately 130,000 passengers daily, leaves around 25,000 Canadians stranded abroad. Air Canada operates around 700 flights per day, and passengers can request full refunds via the airline's website.

The airline's latest offer proposed a total compensation increase of 38 per cent over four years, but the union deemed it insufficient. *—PTI*

Nearly 10,000 Canada Airlines flight attendants went on strike, affecting approximately 130,000 passengers daily ***PHOTO: X @AIRCANADAPILOTS***

300 booked for terrorism in Pak

FAISALABAD, 16 AUG

A local police station has registered terrorism charges against 300 individuals in connection with the arson of two worship sites belonging to the Ahmadiyya community. According to reports from Dawn, 47 individuals have been specifically named, while the remaining suspects are unidentified. The charges fall under Section 7 of the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997 and various sections of the Pakistan Penal Code.

Witnesses allege that Hafiz Rafaqat, a ticket-holder for Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), mobilised a mob armed with rods and bricks, which gathered outside a prominent Ahmadi site. The crowd launched attacks, resulting in injuries among community members who tried to defend their worship spaces. The attackers also vandalised nearby Ahmadi residences. *—ANI*

Trump partially retreats from DC police take over

WASHINGTON, 16 AUG

The Trump administration backed down from an attempt to take over Washington DC's police department by installing the DEA as the head district's "emergency policy commissioner". The partial retreat interrupted one aspect of the most sweeping uses of federal authority over a local government in modern times.

Washington DC's Police Chief Pamela Smith will retain control of the force after the city sued over US Attorney General Pam Bondi naming the head of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) as the district's "emergency police commissioner".

The lawsuit asked a judge to void Bondi's order and stop the DEA head from taking any position of command in the force. Although the judge has not yet given her verdict she said the White House doesn't have full control of the police force.

This prompted Bondi to agree to leave the Smith in charge. However, she directed the District's police to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement regardless of any city law.

About 800 National Guard troops are in the national capital. Troops have been spotted standing outside baseball's Nationals Park and neighbourhood restaurants. The White House says guard members aren't making arrests but are protecting law enforcement officers who are making arrests and helping deter violent crime. President Donald Trump has said one of the objectives will be removing homeless people. *—PTI*

Protestors in Washington DC condemn the Trump administration's deployment of National Guard to the capital ***PHOTO: PTI***

Carney to visit Mexico in Sept amid tariffs

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney will visit Mexico in September to meet with Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum. The meeting comes as America's neighbours deal with US tariffs and prepare for a review of the free trade deal between the three countries next year. Carney had sent his foreign minister as well as his finance minister to meet with Sheinbaum earlier this month in a bid to diversity trade. Sheinbaum visited Canada during the G7 summit in June.

MUSK THINKS FBI CHIEF'S GIRLFRIEND IS A MOSSAD PLANT

WASHINGTON, 16 AUG

Amid speculations that Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Kash Patel's girlfriend, Alexis Wilkins, was a Mossad agent, former DOGE chief Elon Musk implied that she was an "intelligence asset," fuelling the social media theories

The theories stem from Patel's handling of the Jeffrey Epstein case, with many believing that Israel was trying to cover for the alleged sex-offender.

Musk cryptically posted on X a comment he overheard a comment at a party. "If your gf is a 10, you're an asset, as in intelligence agency asset."

FBI Director Kash Patel with girlfriend Alexis Wilkins

Wilkins has repeatedly denied the allegations. *—Agencies*

MESSAGE OF UNITY

100 calm days of Pope Leo XIV

VATICAN CITY, 16 AUG

As Robert Prevost marks his 100th day as Pope Leo XIV this weekend, the contours of his pontificate have begun to become clear, primarily where he shows continuity and change with Pope Francis. Perhaps the biggest takeaway is his reserved manner.

He seems eager to avoid making the papacy about himself.

Leo has certainly gone out of his way in his first 100 days to try to heal divisions that deepened during Francis's pontificate. His signature issue — confronting artificial intelligence — is something that Conservatives and Progressives agree on.

Leo has cemented Francis's environmental legacy by celebrating the first-ever ecologically inspired Mass. He also gave the go-ahead for the Vatican to turn a 430-hectare field into a vast solar farm. He has also decried Israel's war in Gaza and called for the restoration of humanitarian aid. At 69, he seems to know that he has time on his side, and that after Francis' revolutionary papacy, the church might need a bit of a breather. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Ola unveils next gen EVs, advanced battery tech

BENGALURU, 16 AUG

Ola Electric marked India's 79th Independence Day by unveiling a range of new products and technological innovations at its Sankalp 2025 event. The company showcased its indigenously developed 4680 Bharat Cell, India's first rare-earth-free Ferrite Motor, and the Gen 4 EV platform — a scalable solution for 2W, 3W, and 4W vehicles. It also introduced MoveOS 6, an AI-powered intelligence system, along with drones and humanoid concepts, all engineered in India. "This is our vision to secure India's energy sovereignty and make our nation a global leader in the EV ecosystem," said Bhavish Aggarwal, Ola Electric's founder and CEO, on X. Among the key highlights was the unveiling of the Diamondhead electric motorcycle prototype, which Aggarwal described as "a step towards singularity." The launch is targeted for 2027, priced under Rs 5 lakh. Ola also introduced the S1 Pro Sport scooter, featuring gas-charged rear suspension, carbon fibre detailing, and ADAS. Deliveries begin January 2026. Additionally, the 4680 Bharat Cell will be integrated into the Roadster X+ and S1 Pro+, with deliveries starting this Navratri. *—ANI*

EaseMyTrip charts long-term growth with EMT 2.0 plan

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

EaseMyTrip has unveiled its EMT 2.0 strategy to drive long-term growth through diversification and strategic acquisitions. The plan shifts focus from flight bookings to higher-margin verticals like hotels, holidays, wellness, and mobility. Founder and Chairman Nishant Pitti said the strategy aims to "compound trust and distribution" while building resilient business. Promoters have committed to long-term value creation, drawing zero salary and retaining their stakes. Recent Q1 investments led to a temporary PAT dip, but the firm highlighted key growth drivers: an 81.2 per cent YoY increase in its Hotels and Packages business, a 151 per cent rise in Dubai operations, and new acquisitions of premium hospitality assets. EMT 2.0 targets up to 49 per cent stakes in profitable firms, leveraging firm's brand, 17-year legacy, and 72,000+ travel agent network. The goal is to build an integrated travel, hospitality, and lifestyle ecosystem with improved retention and profitability, powered by tech and data-led personalisation. *—ANI*

India now eyes self-reliance in fertilisers

India is likely to reduce import dependence; It imported 177 LMT fertiliser in 2024

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

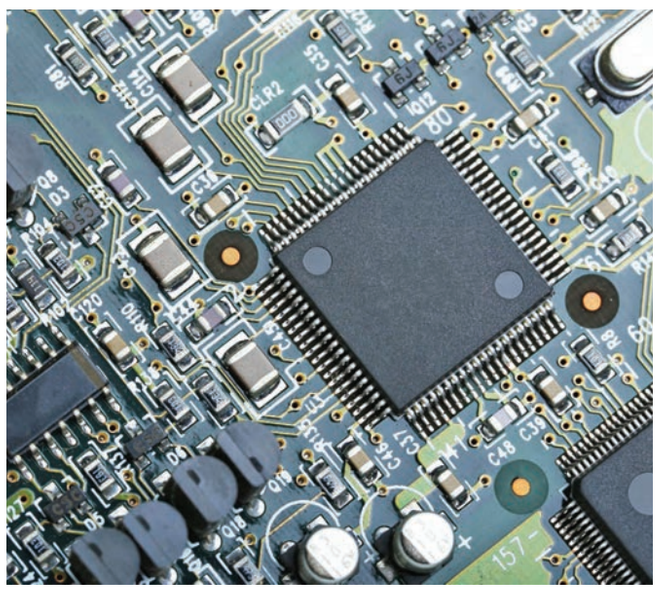
In his Independence Day address from the Red Fort, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for urgent efforts to reduce India's dependency on fertiliser imports, mirroring the nation's push for energy independence.

Highlighting the country's reliance on global fertiliser supply, Modi urged farmers to adopt scientific and responsible use of fertilisers, warning of long-term soil degradation. He appealed to the youth, private sector and industry to explore indigenous alternatives and build domestic reserves. "Let us find new ways and prepare our own fertilisers as per India's requirement," he said.

The Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers echoed this, citing progress in domestic production, which rose from 385 LMT in 2014–15 to 503 LMT in 2023–24. However, India still imported 177 LMT last year to meet total demand of 601 LMT.

Meanwhile, India's semiconductor ambitions are gaining traction with a strategic focus on mature-node manufacturing (28nm to 65nm), catering to sectors like automotive, telecom, and industrial electronics.

According to Bastion Research, this pivot positions India to fill a key global supply gap, as countries seek alternatives to China under the China+1 strategy. India is already recognised for its excellence in semiconductor system integration across key sectors such as medical tech and consumer electronics.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi also announced that made-in-India semiconductor chips will reach the market by year-end *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

India's semiconductor roadmap began with the launch of the Rs 76,000 crore Semicon India Programme in 2021. The country has since approved 10 projects across six states with investments totalling Rs 1.6 lakh crore. Four new semiconductor manufacturing projects were cleared this month in Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, and Punjab.

PM Modi also announced that made-in-India semiconductor chips will reach the market by year-end. Of six approved semiconductor plants, four are in Gujarat, one in Assam, and the latest – a Foxconn-HCL joint venture – will be built in Jewar, Uttar Pradesh. *—ANI*

Modi's GST reform push wins industry praise

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement of sweeping reforms to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) system has been welcomed by business leaders and economists alike.

During his Independence Day address, PM Modi said the government will revisit the current GST framework, aiming to simplify and streamline tax slabs. Following the announcement, government sources revealed a proposal to eliminate the 12 per cent and 28 per cent slabs, retaining only the 5 per cent and 18 per cent rates.

As part of the plan, 99 per cent of goods currently taxed at 12 per cent would move to 5 per cent, while 90 per cent of items in the 28 per cent category would shift to 18 per cent. This simplification is intended to ease the tax burden on consumers and stimulate economic activity.

Pankaj Mohindroo, Chairman of the India Cellular & Electronics Association (ICEA), praised the move. "Rationalising slabs will put more money in consumers' hands, boosting demand. It's essential for Viksit Bharat @ 2047," he said.

Economist Ved Jain noted that after eight years of GST implementation, with improved collections and advanced data analysis tools like AI, the time is right to reduce the number of tax rates. He suggested a simplified structure with a merit rate, a standard rate, and a demerit rate.

Ranjeet Mehta, CEO of PHDCCI, said the reforms, expected by October, will deliver long-term benefits.

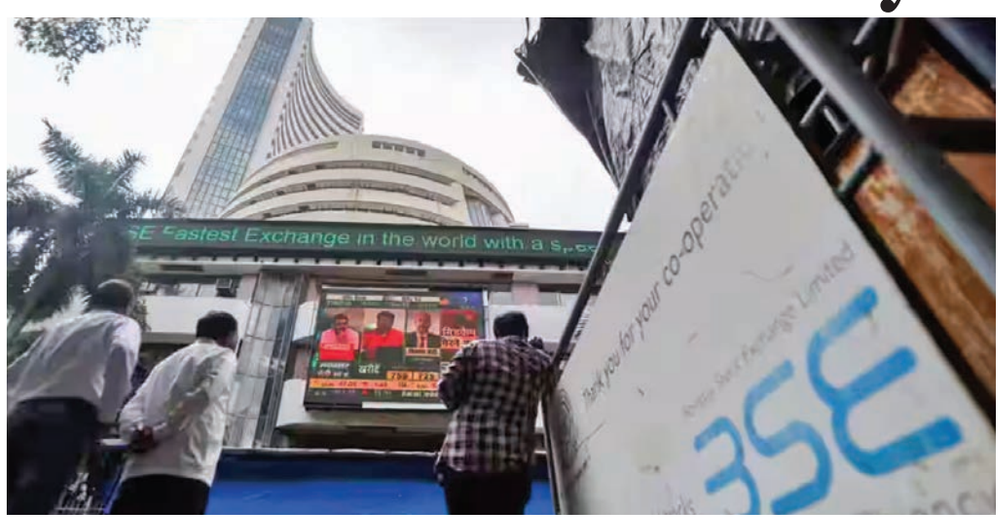
BJP MP and CAIT Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal added that the changes would aid small traders, MSMEs, and the retail sector, especially ahead of the festive season.

The move is widely seen as a significant step toward making India's tax system more efficient and business-friendly. *—ANI*

What will be cheaper after the GST rejig?

- Health and life insurance
- Footwear.
- Bicycles.
- Utensils.
- Frozen vegetables
- Handbags made of jute or cotton.
- Carpets.
- Furniture.
- Umbrellas.
- Toothpaste.
- Feeding bottles.
- Umbrellas.
- Pencils.
- Namkeens includin bhujiya.
- Condensed milk.
- Dried fruits.
- Pasta. •Jams.

'Nifty may swing -11% to +4% amid uncertainty'



BofA projects subdued earnings growth for the Nifty — 7 per cent in FY26 and 11 per cent in FY27 — notably below consensus estimates of 9 per cent and 15 per cent *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

The Nifty 50 index may fluctuate between -11 per cent and +4 per cent around its year-end target of 25,000, driven by a range of macroeconomic uncertainties, according to a report by BofA Securities.

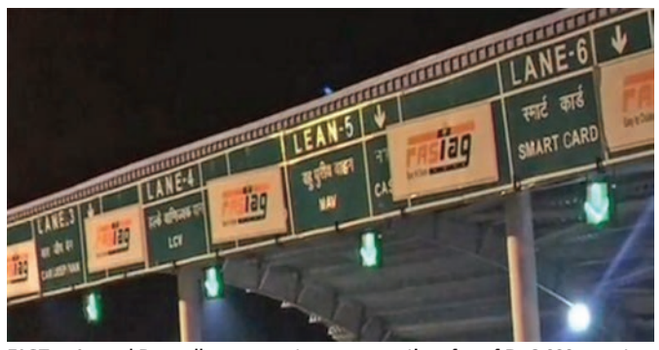
The report highlights key risks including possible US trade tariffs on Indian goods, a weakening US macroeconomic outlook, and policy responses from central banks such as the Federal Reserve and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Domestic political developments, particularly state elections across six major Indian states — responsible for over 16 per cent of India's public subsidy and capital expenditure — could also impact market sentiment.

While BofA has retained its Nifty year-end target of 25,000, it warned of significant volatility around that mark. "We expect Nifty to swing -11 per cent to +4 per cent from the target, as markets react to developments related to tariffs, the US economy, central bank rate decisions, and policy support measures," the report said.

BofA projects subdued earnings growth for the Nifty — 7 per cent in FY26 and 11 per cent in FY27 — notably below consensus estimates of 9 per cent and 15 per cent. The report adds that each earnings season could trigger corrections, rather than sustained rallies.

However, the outlook could improve if India implements timely legislative and fiscal reforms, potentially supported by higher RBI dividends, asset monetisation, fuel duties, and leveraged infrastructure investments.

Currently, both the Nifty and BSE Sensex have fallen about three per cent this year, contributing to cumulative losses of 12.6 per cent and 11.7 per cent, respectively, from their peaks in September last year. *—ANI*



FASTag Annual Pass allows users to pay a one-time fee of Rs 3,000, granting one year's validity or 200 toll plaza crossings *PHOTO: PTI*

NHAI launches FASTag annual pass across India

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

In a move to enhance ease of living and promote technology-driven solutions, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) launched the 'FASTag Annual Pass' across approximately 1,150 toll plazas on National Highways and Expressways from Independence Day.

The initiative received a strong response on Day One, with around 1.4 lakh users purchasing and activating the pass by 7 PM. Nearly 1.39 lakh toll transactions were recorded under the new system, according to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

The pass allows users to pay a one-time fee of Rs 3,000, granting one year's validity or 200 toll plaza crossings—whichever comes first. Applicable to all non-commercial vehicles with a valid FASTag, the pass is activated within two hours of payment via 'Rajmargyatra App' or NHAI website. The app is witnessing heavy traffic, with 20,000 to 25,000 concurrent users at any given time. Pass holders are also receiving SMS confirmations of zero toll deductions upon use.

To ensure a smooth experience, NHAI has deployed nodal officers at each toll plaza and strengthened its grievance redressal system. 1033 National Highway Helpline has been bolstered with over 100 new executives to handle user queries efficiently.

With a FASTag penetration the system has transformed electronic toll collection in India. *—ANI*

AMID US TARIFFS, STALIN SEEKS SPECIAL RELIEF PACKAGE

CHENNAI, 16 AUG

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking a special financial relief package to counter impact of enhanced US tariffs on Indian imports, warning of significant threats to state's industries and employment.

Stalin said Tamil Nadu, with 31 per cent of its USD 52.1 billion exports heading to the US in FY24, faces a disproportionately higher risk than other states from the existing 25 per cent tariff, which could escalate to 50 per cent. In comparison, US accounts for 20 per cent of India's total exports.

The most affected sectors include textiles, apparels, machinery, auto components, gems and jewellery, leather, footwear, marine products, and chemicals — all labour-intensive. Stalin warned that nearly 30 lakh jobs in Tamil Nadu's textile industry alone, which employs 75 lakh people and contributes 28 per cent of India's textile exports, are at immediate risk.

He proposed several measures:

- Correction of the GST inverted duty structure on man-made fibre by bringing the entire chain under a 5 per cent slab.
- Removal of import duty on all cotton varieties.
- 30 per cent collateral-free loans under the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme.
- Five per cent interest subvention and a two-year moratorium on principal ■ Enhancing RoDTEP benefits to five per cent.
- Credit support for all textile exports, including yarn.

Stalin also urged for a special interest subvention scheme for exporters across sectors, acceleration of FTAs, and relief measures akin to Brazil's tax deferrals for exporters. He called for Centre's urgent intervention, warning that Tamil Nadu's manufacturing sector faces an unprecedented crisis. *—PTI*

'STRONG MONSOON, RISING WAGES TO FUEL ECONOMY RECOVERY'

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

India's rural economy is showing signs of a broad-based recovery, driven by a strong monsoon, rising rural wages, and increased government spending, according to a report by Ambit Asset Management.

The monsoon season has started well in FY26, with June rainfall at 105 per cent of the long-period average (LPA), supporting timely and widespread sowing of pulses, oilseeds, and coarse cereals. As of July-end, kharif sowing is already 8 per cent ahead.

The report highlights that rural wages, both agricultural and non-agricultural, are rebounding after years of stagnation. Real wage growth turned positive in mid-FY25, aided by easing inflation and an infrastructure push under schemes such as PMAY, Jal Jeevan Mission, and rural road development.

Improved job availability is reflected in moderating demand for MGNREGA work, signalling increased private-sector employment. Rising wages are also boosting rural liquidity and supporting higher consumption of FMCG goods, two-wheelers, and household durables.

The rural economy had faced severe headwinds between FY20 and FY24, with inflation reaching 7.5 per cent, farm incomes under pressure, and rising costs of inputs.

The Covid-19 pandemic worsened the situation through reverse migration, consumption slowdown, and agricultural distress.

The report concludes that with better rainfall, improving incomes, and higher spending, rural India is poised to regain momentum, supporting broader economic recovery in the quarters ahead. *—ANI*

Hospitality giants eye eco-tourism in Andaman

PORT BLAIR, 16 AUG

Leading hospitality brands, including Tata Group's Indian Hotels Company Ltd (IHCL) and Hyatt Hotels Corp, have expressed interest in developing eco-tourism resorts across four locations in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands — Neil Island, Aves Island, Long Island, and Smith Island — officials confirmed on Saturday.

The projects will be developed on a public-private partnership (PPP) basis. Aves Island, previously uninhabited, will be opened to tourists for the first time, and is expected to rival Havelock as a premier destination. It features coconut plantations, coral beds, and a 2-km coastline ideal for eco-camping.

The Andaman & Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation (ANIIDCO) held a virtual pre-bid meeting on August 14, which saw participation from major players like The Leela, Club Mahindra, Ambuja Neotia, Chalet Hotels, Juniper Hotels, The Park, Polo Hotels, and the GVK Group.

ANIIDCO MD Chanchal Yadav announced that investor site visits are planned for early September, ahead of the bidding on 15 September

Each resort will be developed under a design, build, finance, operate, and transfer model. Estimated investments include Rs 36 crore for Aves Island, Rs 391 crore for Long Island's Lalaji Bay, Rs 60 crore for Smith Island, and Rs 172 crore for Neil Island. *—PTI*

20% ETHANOL & 80% PETROL

Netizens fume as E20 petrol damages vehicles

BENGALURU, 16 AUG

Despite expectations of cost savings and environmental benefits, India's rollout of E20 petrol — containing 20 per cent ethanol and 80 per cent petrol — has triggered consumer backlash over rising vehicle maintenance costs and reduced fuel efficiency.

The Ministry of Petroleum has acknowledged that while ethanol was initially cheaper than petrol, procurement costs have now risen. The current weighted average price of ethanol is higher than petrol, negating any consumer savings at the pump.

Compounding concerns, E20 compatibility issues are surfacing, particularly for vehicles manufactured before 2023. Ethanol's hygroscopic nature leads to moisture retention, resulting in rusted fuel tanks, degraded oil seals, and incomplete combustion — all of which reduce mileage and engine performance. Older vehicles may also require more frequent servicing and fuel injector maintenance.

Compounding concerns, E20 compatibility issues are surfacing, particularly for vehicles manufactured before 2023 *PHOTO: ANI*

Auto manufacturers have largely remained silent, though some have privately expressed concern. A few are reportedly considering offering E20-compatible upgrades at an added cost.

Social media users have voiced frustration. "No one is opposing E20, but forcing it into incompatible engines is voiding warranties and causing costly damage," wrote user @vigilante_monk on X.

Nitish Bharadwa criticised the government's push, stating, "Ethanol is damaging cars, mileage is going down, engines are getting ruined... this truth cannot be changed."

User @himanshu31_ warned that the issue could have political consequences: "The government's arrogance in ignoring public outrage will cost them heavily in upcoming elections."

Another user, @venkat_fin9, added, "Let's not pretend producing ethanol is some eco-friendly miracle either."

Public sentiment is growing increasingly critical, raising questions about implementation without adequate infrastructure or consumer choice. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: PTI

Aditi Ashok cuts through Portland Classic

PORTLAND, 16 AUG

Indian golfer Aditi Ashok cut the Standard Portland Classic on the LPGA after an action-packed second round of 2-under 70, here. Aditi had five birdies and three bogeys in her 70 and is now Tied-27th at the halfway stage with an aggregate of 5-under for two days. Indian-American Gurleen Kaur (65-68) is still Tied-second while Savannah Grewal, a Canadian with Indian origins, is T-11 with cards of 69-67. Korea's Jeongeun Lee5 shot a 6-under 67 to take the lead while 65-year-old Juli Inkster fell short in her bid to become the oldest player to cut LPGA Tour history. Lee5, the 36-year-old South Korean player, had a 12-under 132 total at Columbia Edgewater. Winless on the LPGA Tour, she birdied the final five holes on her front nine in the morning round.—*PTI*

USA qualify for U19 Men's Cricket World Cup

DUBAI, 16 AUG

The United States team, led by wicketkeeper-batter Arjun Mahesh, has become the 16th and final side to secure a place in the U19 Men's Cricket World Cup, to be jointly hosted by Zimbabwe and Namibia next year. The team secured their spot in the global event with a game in hand by emphatically beating Canada, Bermuda, and Argentina in the double-round-robin qualifier played in Rydal, Georgia. The USA set the tone with a 65-run win over Canada, followed by big victories against Bermuda and Argentina, putting them in the driver's seat at the halfway stage of the competition.—*PTI*

Delhi HC stays EFI's proposed General Meeting on Sunday

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

The Delhi High Court has restrained the Equestrian Federation of India (EFI) from holding the proposed Extraordinary General Meeting (EOGM) on Sunday and noted that there are serious disputes about virtually every facet of the functioning of the affairs of the sports body.EFI Secretary General Col Jaiveer Singh had on August 2 issued a notice for the EOGM on August 17, but the Rajasthan Equestrian Association (REA) approached the court for a stay.The Court on Friday stayed the EOGM, saying, "There appeared to be no rationale to further confound the uneasy state of affairs in EFI by convening an EOGM" and set 13 Oct, as the next date of hearing. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Brevis' signing complied with rules: CSK

CHENNAI, 16 AUG

Chennai Super Kings on Saturday issued a clarification regarding the signing of Dewald Brevis midway through the IPL 2025 season, saying the signing process of the South African batter was in "complete compliance with the rules and regulations" of the league.A raging controversy was sparked as former India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, currently in the CSK roster, hinted in his YouTube channel that the five-time IPL champions were willing to pay "extra" to avail Brevis' services."Chennai Super Kings categorically clarifies that all actions taken by the franchise during the signing process of Dewald Brevis as a Replacement Player—*PTI*

Squash player Anahat enters NSW Bega Open final

Anahat Singh has won 12 PSA titles from 18 events
PHOTO: IG/ANAHATSINGH13

BEGA, 16 AUG

Teenage Indian squash player Anahat Singh overcame a strong challenge from Egypt's Nour Khafagy to enter the final of the NSW Bega Open 2025, here on Saturday.

The 17-year-old double Asian Games bronze medallist, who became the youngest Indian to win a medal in the continental showpiece, won the gruelling semifinal 3-2 (10-12, 11-5, 11-5, 10-12, 11-7) in 54 minutes.

The top-seeded Anahat, who became the first Indian woman to reach a PSA Copper final, will take on another Egyptian, Habiba Hani, in the title showdown of the USD 25,000 event. Habiba, seeded second, defeated fifth-seeded Indian Akanksha Salunkhe 3-1 (11-9, 7-11, 12-10, 11-6) in 42 minutes. Anahat picked up an injury during the match, but she continued to fight against her Egyptian opponent, who recently won the HCL Tournament.

Anahat, who hails from Delhi and was the youngest member of the Indian contingent for the 2022 Commonwealth Games at just 14 years of age, had defeated South Africa's Hayley Ward 3-0 (11-4, 11-9, 14-12) in the quarterfinals.

Anahat has won 12 PSA titles from 18 events, with nine of those victories coming in the last 12 months. Akanksha beat fourth-seeded Australian Alexandra Haydon 3-0 (11-4, 11-7, 11-3) in the last-eight game that lasted 24 minutes.

The NSW Bega Open is the first World Event of the 2025/26 PSA Squash Tour season. —*PTI*

CAFA Nations Cup: Chhetri missing in list of 35 probables

Coach's selection is for upcoming events in Tajikistan & Uzbekistan

Talismanic striker Sunil Chhetri has been left out PHOTO: PTI

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

Talismanic striker Sunil Chhetri has been left out of the 35 probables named by newly-appointed Indian football team head coach Khalid Jamil for the upcoming CAFA Nations Cup in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on Saturday.

It's unlikely that he was dropped based on his form in the four matches he played after coming back from his international retirement. However, it's also not known whether Chhetri himself requested not to consider him for the tournament, to be held later this month, or if he was rested as his Indian Super League (ISL) side Bengaluru FC is yet to start pre-season training. Bengaluru FC recently suspended salaries for its first-team players and staff, including that of Chhetri, due to uncertainty surrounding the ISL's future.

However, Jamil's list of probables includes other Bengaluru FC players like goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh, defenders Chinglensana Singh, Rahul Bheke, Roshan Singh Naorem, and midfielder Suresh Singh. All India Football Federation (AIFF) officials are not willing to comment on the matter, saying "the question should be asked to the head coach". —*PTI*

EZRI KONSA SEES RED IN DRAB DRAW

DUBAI, 16 AUG

Newcastle United struggled to cut the edge in front of goal in the absence of star striker Alexander Isak as they played out a goalless draw with Aston Villa at Villa Park on Saturday.

The lacklustre affair proved an anticlimax as the early kick-off on the opening weekend of the new Premier League season, with Ezri Konsa's 66th-minute red card the only real moment of jeopardy.

With Isak unavailable as he continues to push for a move to Liverpool, Newcastle boss Eddie Howe was forced to play recognised winger Anthony Gordon up front. —*PTI*

PHOTO: @ASTON

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH GALA

India's young boxers in China have arrived in Urumqi PHOTO: PTI

India's young boxers arrive in China

URUMQI, 16 AUG

India will be represented by a 59-member strong contingent in the third 'Belt and Road' International Youth Boxing Gala U17-U19-U23 international training camp and tournament, scheduled to be held in Urumqi, Xinjiang province, China, from 15 to 30 August.

The squad, comprising 20 boys and 20 girls, supported by 12 coaches, six support staff, and one referee and judge, had already reached China.

Organised by the Chinese Boxing Federation and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Government, the event begins with a training camp from 17 to 25 August in Urumqi, followed by the competition phase from 26 to 29 August in Urumqi and Yili.

Only U-17 boys and girls are representing India at this edition.

The boxers were selected from the sixth U-17 junior boys and girls National Boxing Championships 2025, with gold and silver medallists in the Asian Youth Games weight categories and gold medallists in the Non-Asian Youth Games weight categories, cutting.

Boxers will compete across multiple divisions. U17 boys and girls will contest in 13 weight categories– 46kg, 48kg, 50kg, 52kg, 54kg, 57kg, 60kg, 63kg, 66kg, 70kg, 75kg, 80kg, and +80kg.

Participation in this international training camp and competition is expected to provide India's young boxers with valuable exposure and experience against strong global opponents.

In recent months, Indian junior boxers have delivered standout performances at international competitions, most notably at the Asian U15 and U17 Championships earlier this year, where the team secured 43 medals and finished second overall. —*PTI*

TANYA LIFTS SAIPAN INT'L BADMINTON CROWN

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

Top-seeded Indian Tanya Hemanth capped off a strong run at the Saipan International 2025 with a straight-game win over Japan's Kanae Sakai in the women's singles final on Saturday.

The 21-year-old, ranked 86th in the world, defeated the unseeded Sakai 15-10, 15-8 at the Oleai Sports Complex in Northern Mariana Islands to secure her fourth international series title.

The Saipan International is part of the Badminton World Federation's trial events for the experimental 3x15 scoring system, where each game is played to 15 points instead of the conventional 21. Hemanth, who had earlier triumphed at the India International (2022), Iran Fajr International (2023), and Bendigo International (2024), added another feather to her cap with Saturday's victory. —*PTI*

Former Australian cricketer Bob Simpson dies

SYDNEY, 16 AUG

PHOTO: X/@CRICAUS

Bob Simpson, a former player, captain, and coach, and one of the most influential figures in Australian cricket, has died at the age of 89.

Cricket Australia on Saturday confirmed the death of Simpson, who represented Australia in 62 tests and two one-day internationals between 1957 and 1978.

Simpson scored 4,869 test runs, including 10 centuries and 27 half-centuries, and took 71 wickets, while captaining Australia in 39 tests.

Born in the inner-city Sydney suburb of Marrickville, the third son of immigrant parents from Scotland, Simpson was just 16 when he made his first-class debut for New South Wales state against Victoria.

"I was a naturally ambitious person anyway and never had any doubts I could go further," Simpson said. "It sounds cocky, but I always believed in my talents."

He coached Australia from 1986 to 1996, and under his firm and steady guidance, Australia won the 1987 World Cup, four Ashes campaigns, and in 1995 the Frank Worrell Trophy, ending a 17-year drought against the West Indies. —*PTI*

BCCI INTRODUCES INJURY REPLACEMENT RULE FOR 2025-26

NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE

In a major development, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has amended the playing conditions and allowed injury replacements in multi-day tournaments for the upcoming domestic season. The decision comes in the wake of Rishabh Pant's injury, when the wicketkeeper-batter had to walk out to bat despite a fractured foot during the fourth Test against England in Manchester.

While such a rule is still not implemented by the International Cricket Council, the BCCI introduced the rule in Playing Conditions for the 2025-26 season in the multi-day cricket under a new category 'Serious Injury Replacement'. —*PTI*

CINCINNATI OPEN

Aryna and Gauff crash out; Alcaraz survives to reach semis

CINCINNATI, 16 AUG

World number one Aryna Sabalenka and second-ranked Coco Gauff were sent crashing out of the ATP-WTA Cincinnati Open on Friday as Carlos Alcaraz fought off a fierce challenge from Andrey Rublev to reach the semi-finals. Top seed and defending champion Sabalenka had no answer for Elena Rybakina, falling to the 2022 Wimbledon champion 6-1, 6-4. Reigning French Open champion Gauff had 16 double faults in a 2-6, 6-4, 6-3 exit at the hands of seventh-seeded Italian Jasmine Paolini. Spain's second-ranked Alcaraz had his difficulties, but he broke Rublev in the final game of a tense duel to emerge a 6-3, 4-6, 7-5 winner

Carlos Alcaraz PHOTO: @CINCINNATI

and will face third-seeded Alexander Zverev, who brought fifth-seeded Toronto champion Ben Shelton's run to an end with a 6-2, 6-2 victory. Zverev earned a 4-1 lead in the second set as Shelton angrily tossed his racquet on the changeover, and the 2021 champion polished off the win on a second match point. He now has 24 hours to try to get fit. "I'm not feeling too great now, but I have a day to get fresh," Zverev said. "I hope to be at 100%.

"I'm not sure what happened. I felt very well, but at the end of the first set, it got progressively worse. But I'll do all I can to give it a shot tomorrow." —*PTI*

Maxwell powers Australia's win over SA

CAIRNS, 16 AUG

Australia's Glenn Maxwell produced an unbeaten half-century in a tense chase to help the hosts edge out South Africa by two wickets in the third and final Twenty20 International and complete a 2-1 series victory in Cairns on Saturday.

Maxwell's unbeaten 62 off 36 balls helped Australia chase

down a 173-run target with one ball to spare in a thrilling decider at the Cazalys Stadium.

After 18 overs of their innings, it was a run-a-ball target for Australia with Maxwell in the middle.South African Corbin Bosch (3-26) claimed two wickets in the penultimate over.

Australia 173 for 8 (Maxwell 62*, Marsh 54, Bosch 3-26) beat South Africa 172 for 7 (Brevis 53, Ellis 3-31) by two wickets. —*PTI*

PREMIER LEAGUE

Liverpool strike late to beat Bournemouth

LIVERPOOL, 16 AUG

Liverpool struck twice in the final minutes through Federico Chiesa and Mohamed Salah to overcome a battling Bournemouth 4-2 in a thrilling start to the Premier League season on Friday. Antoine Semenyo looked to have rescued a point for the Cherries by scoring twice, after he had reported an incident of racial abuse from a fan, to cancel out Hugo Ekitike and Cody Gakpo's strikes for the defending champions. But on an emotive night as Anfield remembered Diogo Jota, Chiesa was the unlikely hero as the injury-hit Italian fired the home side back in front before Salah rounded off the scoring.

Mohamed Salah PHOTO: X/@PL

Liverpool's joy at celebrating a record-equalling 19th English top-flight title turned to tragedy during the off-season as forward Jota was killed alongside his brother Andre Silva in a car accident last month at the age of 28.

Just 11 days before the accident, the Portuguese international had married Rute Cardoso, the mother of his three children.

During a minute's silence, fans held up a giant mosaic with the initials of Jota and Silva, who was also a footballer, and their shirt numbers in the Portuguese flag.

LIVERPOOL MATCH HALTED AFTER RACIST ABUSE FROM CROWD

Referee Anthony Taylor stopped play at a Liverpool corner in the 29th minute to address the racist abuse incident, summoning both managers to the touchline for a briefing. Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk and Bournemouth counterpart Adam Smith were then called over to the benches for further instructions before play resumed four minutes later.The incident at Anfield follows reports of Tottenham Hotspur's French forward Mathys Tel being subjected to racist abus e on social media after missing a penalty in his team's Super Cup defeat by Paris St Germain. —*PTI*

Chess: Gukesh ends tied 6th; Aronian wins title

ST. LOUIS, 16 AUG

World champion GM D Gukesh finished tied sixth as Levon Aronian of the USA convincingly won the St. Louis Rapid and Blitz that concluded here.

Gukesh raised visions of a great comeback on the final day of the event as he raced to 3.5 points from his first four games.

Conceding a draw to Aronian in the first game, the Indian accounted for Americans Shankland, Wesley So, and Uzbek Grandmaster Nodirbek Abdusattorov before losing steam.

In the last five games, Gukesh drew three and lost two games to end his overall campaign on 18 points.

Aronian started the day with a two-point lead and won the event two rounds to spare, scoring 24.5 points. Fabiano Caruana of the United States finished a distant second on 21.5 points, a half point more than the French Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, who finished third. —*PTI*